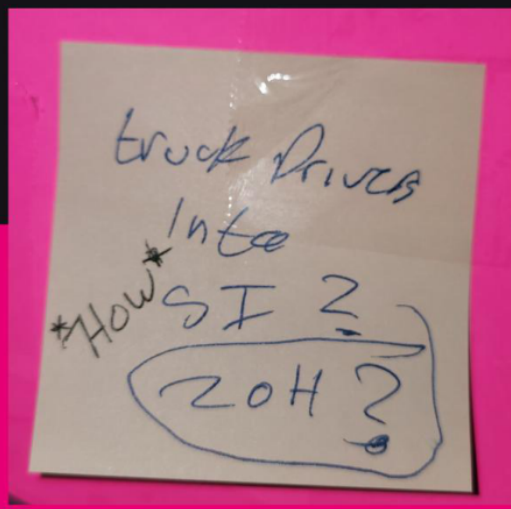
INTENTIONAL SOCIETY



The Power of Collective Self-Interest

By T Casey Hart

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INTENTIONAL SOCIETY: THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE SELF-INTEREST

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Table of Contents

Copyright Page

Dedication

Intentional Society: The Power of Collective Self-Interest

Preface to the Preface

Preface

My Logical Journey To SI

Part 1: Understanding SI and EM | Chapter 1: Defining Sociointentionalism

Chapter 2: Defining Egomeritism

Chapter 3: Historical and Cultural Context

Part 2: The Effects of EM on Society

Chapter 4: Personal Fulfillment and Happiness

Chapter 5: Community Dynamics

Chapter 6: Work and Career

Chapter 7: Romantic and Platonic Relationships

Chapter 8: Social Hierarchy and Authority

Chapter 9: Equality and Fairness

Chapter 10: Personal Well-being

Part 3: Moving Towards Sociointentionalism

Chapter 11: Recognizing the Cycle

Chapter 12: Shifting Motivations

Chapter 13: Building Supportive Communities

Chapter 14: Promoting Equality and Social Justice

Chapter 15: Cultivating Authentic Relationships

Chapter 16: Nurturing Trivita

Chapter 17: Redefining Success

Conclusion

Part 4: Extras

Dedicated to all the Besties: Lily, Midzy, Salad, Ham, Elffy, Tsukune, Oli, Archie, Erin, Bell, Pen, Cooks, Kringles, Sheen, Kev, Wake

Trigger Warning: This book discusses topics such as societal expectations, mental health struggles, suicidal ideation, and systemic inequities that may be sensitive for some readers.

Intentional Society: The Power of Collective Self-Interest

by T. Casey Hart

Preface to the Preface

This is a philosophy book. My objective with this text is to share my solution to the problem. If you are anything like me, you have been inching toward the end of your rope, these last few years especially. Something is wrong and all we do is talk about it, so yeah, you're gonna be a little disheartened.

I challenge you to finish this book. Give this a try. If it's bullshit, toss it.

It's not bullshit.

"Just because you find that life's not fair, it

Doesn't mean that you just have to grin and bear it

If you always take it on the chin and wear it

You might as well be saying you think that it's OK

And that's not right

And if it's not right

You have to put it right"

-Naughty (Matilda musical)

Preface

I've been procrastinating on finishing this book. Recently, I put a big sticker on my **fulfillment board**—a pair of rainbow-colored snow leopards sitting together. It's in the *Self-Satisfaction* section. For weeks, I'd been staring at the empty space reserved for writing, beating myself up for not being able to put anything there. But then I realized: while I hadn't been writing, I'd done an excellent job of enjoying myself for once. And that's worth celebrating too.

It felt good, and a little surprising, to give myself credit for something I rarely do—prioritize me. Usually, I'm so focused on achieving, producing, or fixing that I forget the simple joy of being. That sticker reminded me there's value in taking time to just exist, even if it feels unproductive.

For the first time, my procrastination wasn't a source of shame but a reason to smile. That shift made me realize something about how I approach life: I've been looking for ways to change the world while neglecting the parts of me that needed change the most.

Procrastination has led to renewed passion and drive. I'd like to share how I got here.

Learning to Live with Principles

There's a saying I heard once, though I can't remember where: *You don't have principles if they've never inconvenienced you.* It hit me hard. Too often, we justify our actions based on immediate satisfaction rather than any real guiding values. Living with principles sometimes means making choices that leave you less happy in the moment but more aligned with the person you want to be.

It's not that people don't want to have principles—it's that we're often caught up in doing **what everyone else is doing.** Our thoughts get tangled in what's popular or acceptable at the time, rather than what's right or meaningful. We focus on appearances: presenting ourselves correctly, saying the right things, representing our causes in the "right" way. But that mindset doesn't build change. It's action that shifts the world, not endless debate.

Take self-love as an example. You don't wake up one day loving yourself because you thought about it hard enough. You love yourself by enforcing your value—by surrounding yourself with people who treat you with care, by stepping outside your comfort zone, by proving through action that you deserve good things. The same is true for societal change. Talking online about issues like tolerance or inequality is useful, but it's not enough. Real progress happens when we act—when we meet people, connect, and work together.

Grappling with Simple Truths

In therapy, I've been confronting a lot of truths that are simple but hard to accept. For example, everyone perceives the world completely differently. Everything I hear, see, or experience is

filtered through countless variables: my past, my mood, my relationships, even whether I've eaten enough that day. Why, then, do I expect others to see me exactly as I want to be seen? Why do we pour so much energy into controlling how others perceive us when it's impossible?

Our world seems obsessed with sameness. AI filters turn every face into a clone of celebrity perfection. **Everyone mocks individuality as "cringe." But innovation comes from difference.** Growth comes from letting the world—and the people in it—be weird, unique, and unpredictable. We don't need everyone to look or think the same to move forward; we need people willing to be themselves and take action, even if it's awkward or embarrassing.

The Limits We Accept

The other day, I saw a post about hydroponic gardens. Someone suggested we build skyscrapers in every city full of gardens to feed local communities. The comments were flooded with reasons why it wouldn't work: cost, energy, laws. All valid points, but no one asked, *How do we make it work?*

When humanity wanted to fly, we didn't stop at "it's impossible." We figured it out. Today, we use difficulty or cost as reasons to shut down ideas that could change the world. The bigger the potential impact, the quicker we are to find excuses. Why? Because real change threatens systems built on profit, power, and hierarchy. **Certain people** would make less money if we localized food production or redistributed resources. So instead of trying, we let the system stay the same.

But here's my question: **Can anyone give me a good reason *not* to try?** Not a reason why it's **hard,** but a reason why we shouldn't work toward a society where everyone has food, shelter, and safety. Why shouldn't we aim for a world free of war and violence? Why shouldn't we pursue lives of joy and connection instead of constant competition?

Moving Beyond "Why Should I?"

We seem to have a "*Why should I?"* mindset these days. The belief

that worth is earned through measurable success and that helping others is a burden unless there's something in it for you. But where has that gotten us? Sure, a few billionaires seem happy, but are you?

What if we shifted the question? **Instead of asking, *Why should I help?* what if we asked, *What's stopping me?*** The truth is, most of the barriers to change—cost, time, effort—are obstacles we've created ourselves as a species. They're not insurmountable; they're just inconvenient and deeply woven.

I decided I couldn't keep waiting for the world to change without taking the first step myself. That's why I wrote this book. It's my attempt to practice what I preach, to offer help with no guarantee of return. It's my way of saying: Let's stop waiting. Let's start building the world we want to see.

The Origins of Sociointentionalism

The idea for this book began with a simple conversation about motivations and their impact on experiences. My partner and I were discussing their desire to finally become a professional dancer, now that we have moved to a city where that type of career is more accessible. This was a passion they'd always had but never fully pursued. They were excited at the thought of dancing professionally, but after reading negative testimonials on Reddit from dancers at local clubs, they felt discouraged. The clubs were known to be seedy and exploitative, filled with toxic, often handsy patrons and unsympathetic employers. They were also worried that they just weren't in good enough shape yet and lacked the necessary skills.

My partner justified quitting before giving it a shot because the job wouldn't guarantee a sizable income. **The potential abuse and negativity didn't seem worth it without the promise of substantial financial gain.** But something about this didn't sit right with me. If dancing was their passion, why would they rush into it without proper training? Why would they settle for working at just any club instead of finding the right fit, one that respected them and their craft? Why was money not guaranteed, but abuse was?

As we dug deeper into the testimonials, a pattern emerged: many of the dancers had started working at these clubs because they also needed or wanted the money. Their primary motivation wasn't the art of dance—it was the paycheck. Obviously, everyone needs money, but when money drives your choices, it's easy to end up in places that don't respect or value you. The clubs were abusive because they were built around profit, not passion. Despite my partner's intrinsic love for dancing, they were on the verge of quitting due to the lack of guaranteed extrinsic rewards.

It struck me that if they were given the space to take their time, get in shape, and find a club that respected their values—no matter how long it took—their pure intention would likely lead to a more positive experience and likely higher success. **(Happy dancers tend to keep dancing regardless of how much money they make.)** This conversation sparked a deeper question in me: why do we often let external motivations overshadow what we truly want?

Sociointentionalism (SI) emerged as my response to this realization. At its core, SI is about reclaiming our lives from Egomeritism. It's about focusing on **Balanced Living, Ethical Intentionality, Self-Satisfaction, and Trivita (B.E.S.T.)**. These principles aren't abstract ideals; they're practical tools for navigating a world that often feels overwhelming.

Why SI Matters

SI isn't just a personal philosophy—**it's a framework for collective change.** It's about building a world where we act with intention, treat others with care, and prioritize well-being over appearances. It's about taking **small, deliberate steps** toward a better future, even when the path isn't clear.

The urgency of 2025 demands action. Climate change, inequality, and economic strain aren't problems we can solve overnight, but they're also not reasons to give up. By focusing on what we can do—individually and together—we can create ripples of change that grow into something larger.

An Invitation

This book isn't a solution to all the world's problems. It's an **invitation to think differently**, act intentionally, and build connections that matter. At the end of this book, I'll share a summary of what I hope to gain from this journey—my own needs, my own struggles—and ask for your help. Because creating change isn't something any of us can do alone. (I'll also explain the cryptic cover image;)

For now, I'll leave you with this: **The world doesn't need more perfection. It needs more people willing to try.** So let's try—together.

My Logical Journey To SI

Firstly, I want to say that there are a few fundamental beliefs I hold which I will not waste text explaining:

I believe all people are equally important.

I believe all people deserve to have their needs met.

I believe global peace and cooperation is an **inherent good** which should be the ultimate goal for any society.

I believe no one deserves more humanity than anyone else for any reason.

I believe exclusivity is human, often justified, but is mostly unnecessary.

If you align with these ideas or at least don't overtly stand against them, I recommend you keep reading until the end of the section. I will now attempt to explain the logical journey I had to go on to arrive at Sociointentionalism. If you are looking for a safe place to gauge your interest, the end of this section will give you a good stopping point to see if you're onboard or not.

(My confidence in my writing ability only goes so far, so I will succumb to my base nature and needlessly apologize for the choppiness of some of the following pages. This is the most complicated idea in the book. It's the literal Rubicon for SI, so it was tough to squeeze it into a few pages.)

Start to Finish

We all die, and we have **no control over when or how.** Time moves forward in a straight line. Every choice we make has the potential to go right or wrong, and no amount of research can guarantee a perfect outcome. Randomness plays a significant role in

everything that happens, meaning that no action will prevent your end when the time comes. This doesn't mean your choices don't matter; rather, **each choice carries equal weight in the grand scheme.** So, if you're not making choices that bring you happiness, **what is your goal for the one life you have?**

You can only control yourself, and many of us struggle even with that. Others often act against your best interests, which naturally upsets you. You don't want to go against your own best interests for the sake of someone else, and feeling upset about it is normal—it's not something everyone can control. Therefore, **contentment might come from freeing yourself of the need to control others** and instead focusing that energy on learning to control yourself.

Even those with strong self-control sometimes fail. You try to control yourself, yet there are things you struggle with regularly. **You're not perfect**, and you don't like being expected to be perfect. Nobody likes when others expect them to be flawless, either. Pursuing **perfection is an unattainable goal;** while you have the choice to chase something you know is impossible, that path to happiness isn't for everyone.

For example, our favorite media is created by both seasoned artists and new, emerging talents. We often notice when creators seem to lose their momentum, and many share how they feel pressured to chase perfection or stay consistent enough to retain their audience. Yet no artist remains the same; they naturally evolve over time, which is something we can't control but often enjoy, as we appreciate fresh, passion-driven work. The only constant the artist seems to try to maintain is the size of their audience and the attention they receive. **If audience size weren't a concern, they could focus fully on the art itself and on those who genuinely love it.** The size of the audience tends to correlate to the size of the paycheck as well, so this fixation is clearly rooted.

The Illusion of Quantity and Scarcity

The quantity of something and its significance depends largely on scarcity. **When something is scarce, it matters more**. Yet, there's always a limit to how much of anything we can manage or truly need. While some people desire quantity or excess, those desires

often stem from personal aspirations for happiness, ultimately driven by the brain's chemical responses to certain experiences. So, **wanting an abundance of something we don't need might reflect a lack in other areas of life.**

We can't always get what we want because we can't control every outcome. As mentioned, **any choice carries equal weight, so stressing over "doing it right" is fruitless.**

We prefer to have both our needs and wants met, prioritizing needs first. **Regardless of how much we want something, our needs will always take precedence.** This includes the brain's need for chemicals that help us function well, meaning **desires also originate from underlying needs.** If meeting **all** our needs is possible, it's achievable only through cooperation, which would require everyone to work toward the same goal. However, since we cannot control others or outcomes, true cooperation—the only way to align everyone—is to **allow each person to feel comfortable being on different paths.**

Collective Self Interest

If your intent is to **force** others to behave in a certain way, you're not being honest with yourself—after all, you wouldn't want someone else to force you to be a certain way. You can say you want something, but merely wanting it won't make it happen. **Even those with high privilege have things they desire but can't simply ask for and immediately receive.**

If you're someone who strives to go after what you want and desires a society that works better for you, and you understand now that the only way people can align is by not aligning but being flexible to difference, then the **most selfish yet most humanitarian thing you can do is focus on yourself.** This is the essence of collective self-interest.

Power and Isolation

It only makes sense to pursue the things we can realistically attain, even from a maximalist perspective. So why neglect some of your

needs when you could use your energy to ensure all of them are met? We're all here on this planet, as evolved beings interconnected with one another, meaning **our needs are met through the planet and through each other.** Therefore, isolationism lacks logical support.

For instance, if you manipulate people and feel guilt afterward, you're sacrificing your needs to fulfill a desire born from a deeper lack. This lack likely stems from something you would otherwise gain through genuine connection with people or from nature itself. **Thus, it's in your best interest to pursue authentic ways to meet those needs.** And the only thing you can truly control is yourself. While you can't force loyalty or companionship, you can choose how you cultivate and maintain those relationships. **Manipulation might bring temporary relief but often leads to loneliness in the end.**

The ideal environment, where everyone's needs are met, arises when we focus on ourselves rather than trying to control others. **When you prioritize your needs, those needs will naturally involve kinship and community,** encouraging you to nurture genuine relationships that help sustain them. This approach ensures that, by meeting your needs, you also contribute positively to those around you. Any action done to only benefit the self is actually done against the self, by this logic. A life filled with **isolating actions will leave you lacking in areas where people are required.**

Eventually, if everyone focuses on themselves while tolerating differences, each person will have their unique needs and desires met in their own way, creating a world where we naturally accommodate one another. This world will be satisfying for all because it's built on mutual understanding and respect for individual paths. The only reason this vision seems impossible is the belief that achieving anything requires forcing others to act a certain way. But **a "perfect world" is indeed possible**; it's a world that meets the collective needs of the species, not just the desires of any one individual.

If, like everyone else, your ultimate goal is to have all your needs and wants met, then focus on pursuing that. By doing so, we

collectively move toward a society that fulfills everyone. We can't snap our fingers and change society, nor can we afford to wait for visible signs of change to take action. **There will never be a perfectly comfortable or guaranteed time or method for change.** The world will only change when we do, and that involves each of us doing the **personal work.**

Our world often makes it easy to feel disconnected, as though society needs to change before we can. But the opposite is true. **Society will transform only as we transform.**

We cannot control when or what will happen, and we have present needs that can't be met through wishful thinking alone. Logically, it's often faster to participate within the current society to meet these needs rather than oppose it. However, since outcomes are ultimately out of our control—meaning **there is no "right" way to succeed**—going against society, especially if it leads to greater long-term happiness, is just as valid an option as going along with it. **Both paths offer the same chances of success.**

Self-Expression, and Societal Limitations

Artists often produce their best work when they're starting out with fresh ideas and the freedom to create whatever they want. We resist "nepo babies" because they're given this creative space **without needing to earn it**—but that very freedom often leads to the most exciting, original work. This suggests that any choice is valid and that the one that feels most comfortable will likely bring the most happiness. When you're happy and creating authentically, people tend to appreciate it more because it's original and not forced. So, **following your passion or dream doesn't lower your chances of success.** In fact, it seems your odds are higher when you love what you're doing and take risks rather than sticking to the "script" and doing what you're told.

In college, I once asked a professor if Da Vinci might have seen himself as just a regular person, not necessarily someone destined for greatness. The professor's reaction was anger. It never made sense to me: we learn about those who pushed boundaries, took risks, and pursued what they thought was interesting—regardless of others' opinions—yet are taught and graded in a way that enforces

rigid boundaries on subjective expression. **If we celebrate the rule-breaking artists who became icons, why are we punishing students for doing the same?**

There is value in learning conventional, efficient methods, but if a student strays from this path or shows creativity in unconventional ways, why stifle it? History is filled with successful artists who were told not to make their art a certain way yet ended up changing the landscape of their fields.

It's illogical to limit success to a single path. There are many ways to succeed, (and you can't guarantee that even tried and true methods will work) so if success is your goal, it makes sense to follow the path that aligns most closely with your fulfillment and passion. It will make the process more enjoyable, motivate you to keep going (because its something you actually care about), and **increase your chances that others will feel your passion and engage with your work.**

We all want our needs met. We know that **focusing on ourselves benefits others as well,** making this approach both selfish and altruistic. We also know we can't control outcomes, but by releasing that need for control and focusing on ourselves, we're more likely to arrive at a future where our needs and wants are fulfilled—a great goal for the long run. For the present, success is subjective; while we can't guarantee it, success often follows risk-taking, doing what feels natural, and stepping away from conformity. This approach may actually increase our chances of meeting our needs now by pursuing what genuinely matters to us rather than simply following instructions. What remains is the **fear of doing it, the lack of knowledge on how to start, and the energy it takes to follow through.**

But first, why do we feel this way? The scarcity isn't in desire or need—**it's in money, and the power money brings.** How does one acquire power? Power arises when people follow your lead. In this framework, control over others becomes a way to meet your own needs. We don't all want the same things, and historically, scarcity encouraged the belief that the quickest way to meet needs was to place someone in charge to make decisions on behalf of everyone.

But even with power, you still don't get everything you want; you can't force people to love you, nor can you make your brain feel the right chemicals on demand. So, while we all want our needs met, society has been pursuing power because, in the past, it was the most effective way to meet those needs.

If the pursuit of power once satisfied our fundamental needs, then it's no surprise that it became the foundation of society. We're driven by our desires, yet we're also heavily influenced by how others view us, **because their opinions impact how they treat us.** How we're treated directly affects our ability to meet our needs; we want to be treated well, and we want others' help to fulfill what we need to thrive.

Thus, it's understandable that we've ended up with a society that consolidates power at the top. It's the simplest way to address immediate needs, though it's not necessarily the best approach for long-term progress, as it **keeps society focused on the present instead of preparing for the future.**

At the end of the day, everyone's baseline—where they start—is driven by a sense of lack. No matter how much power someone has, they'll always feel the desire for more. **So, a society that focuses on accumulating and passing around power inevitably centralizes it at the top,** where those in control become desperate to hold onto it. While there are moral and ethical issues involved, the reality is that anyone given excessive power is likely to abuse it, as it's a natural human tendency.

This implies that instead of attempting to control people's morals, we should focus on **dismantling these power structures themselves.** None of us enjoy being controlled, yet we all attempt to control others around us.

Is it any surprise, then, that **conflict only grows over time**? As power becomes more concentrated at the top, **more people experience coercion** and control over their lives, which creates **widespread dissatisfaction and frustration.** This dissatisfaction affects everyone's mental state, often **leading to poorer decision-making.** When people feel trapped or controlled, they tend to act out, sometimes making choices that they wouldn't otherwise make if they felt more secure and valued.

These negative choices and reactions then spill over into how people treat one another. When people are under stress or feel a lack of control, they are **more likely to act in ways that damage relationships**—arguing more, showing less empathy, and offering less support. This growing strain on relationships reduces the willingness to cooperate, as people become more focused on **protecting themselves** than on mutual benefit.

As cooperation declines, it becomes harder for people to support each other in ways that would normally improve access to resources, opportunities, and the fulfillment of needs and desires. Limited cooperation then means that **everyone's options narrow,** making it harder to secure the essentials for a good life. This limitation causes individuals to cling even tighter to whatever small amount of power or control they still feel they possess, **out of fear that they may lose even that.**

This clinging to power and control—often seen as protective—only reinforces the cycle. As each person focuses on holding onto what little they have, the system of concentrated power at the top remains intact, continuing to perpetuate the conditions that started the cycle in the first place. This leads to an **ongoing loop where power remains consolidated,** people continue to feel controlled, and relationships, cooperation, and **overall well-being diminish over time.**

We know this is true because our culture is deeply focused on **autonomy.** Throughout history, art has thrived on creativity and self-expression—there aren't eras of art celebrated for strict conformity or simply "doing what you're told."

Our culture celebrates individuality, especially in the movies and shows many of us grew up with. These films often encouraged us to be ourselves and valued uniqueness. However, historically, subversive books like *Catcher in the Rye* were banned precisely because they challenged norms. In recent years, censorship has increasingly targeted media with similar themes, the very kind of content I loved as a kid. Shows for children often promote being different, encouraging kids to embrace who they are—but as these messages reach broader audiences, adults sometimes try to restrict them. **This pattern highlights our cultural obsession with**

autonomy alongside the ongoing tension to control it.

When we tell stories about imagined worlds, the narrative we return to time and again is about being **true to ourselves** and finding **acceptance despite differences.** If this is what we want for ourselves, it must be something we allow for others, too. The only way to build a society where everyone can genuinely be themselves is to create one based on mutual tolerance and respect.

If you intentionally prioritize your needs being met at the **expense** of others' needs, then you're already aligned with the society we have now—just continue as you are.

The wealthiest person in the world is rich because of the power they were given or took for themselves. Their baseline needs—all their material needs—are met. What's left are the chemicals in their brain that drive satisfaction and happiness. When someone relies solely on exploiting power to get what they want, the only way they know to experience those feelings is by seeking even more power.

For everyone else, **it's actually more beneficial not to seek power** if we want a higher quality of life. If having supportive people around you helps meet all your needs, and forcing people to do things drives them away, then **holding onto power ultimately harms your relationships and well-being.** By contrast, relinquishing control can actually enhance your influence, as it allows you to build genuine connections and support networks, which better fulfills both your material and emotional needs.

Intentions vs. Outcomes

I think a lot about why we do things and whether we're doing them for the right reasons. Since there are both material and immaterial factors, it's essential to consider the outcome of an action alongside the intention behind it. **Intention shapes how you feel about yourself internally, and it influences how others perceive you** —especially those who care about you or your intentions. Yet, there's **also a tangible outcome that impacts both you and others, which holds equal importance.** We can't disregard one for the other, as the material effects of our actions, as well as the chemical reactions in our brains that influence our feelings, play

vital roles in everything we do and everything we are. So, we must care about both our reasons, intentions, and feelings, as well as the material effects of our actions.

Since neither the intention nor the outcome can be neglected reliably or justifiably, and because we can't truly control outcomes, **there's no reason to view things in black-and-white terms.** There's no strict division between being selfish and being altruistic; everything we do has elements of both. For example, if you give money to a homeless person, you feel good about the act, and if someone sees you doing it or you're caught on camera, it might even boost your ego, which is also part of your emotional need.

This suggests that every action is on a similar playing field. **Even actions with negative effects can have outcomes that are interpreted in different ways.** For instance, wars abroad may provide certain comforts to people in the United States. The intent may be to provide for one's country, while the result is the suffering of millions. Conversely, even harmful intentions may yield outcomes that unexpectedly benefit someone.

This doesn't imply that our choices don't matter; rather, it shows that **there's no absolute "right" way to act.** We can't reliably make perfect choices, but the complexity of intention and outcome should remind us that actions are multifaceted.

This matters because, deep down, **we care about our own intentions more than anything else,** even though both intentions and outcomes hold universal importance. No one can entirely separate their needs from their actions, which is why we struggle in jobs we hate—they conflict with our core intentions. Since we can't control outcomes, and our intentions are what matter most to us, **it's essential to put effort into ensuring our intentions align with what we're genuinely happy with.**

Intentions come down to what we want to happen and our understanding of the situation at hand. Since you're the one taking action, fulfilling your intentions requires you to choose actions based on a clear understanding of the situation. **If you researched the potential result and felt comfortable with the action, there's no reason to feel guilt over the outcome,** because we know outcomes are never fully within our control. By focusing on

intentions, you start to make careful, intentional decisions, increasing the chances that outcomes align more closely with what you intended. This alignment, in turn, boosts the positive chemical responses in your brain, enhancing your sense of satisfaction.

Because your "best" is limited by your individual abilities, there should be no pressure to be perfect—no need to make yourself unhappy by striving for unrealistic standards. However, because those positive chemicals in your brain often come from meaningful connections with others, **it's beneficial to put effort into doing your best rather than just the bare minimum.** This means putting thought into both your intentions and your actions, creating a balance where you can **find fulfillment without the pressure of perfection.**

When we're genuinely happy with our own lives, we don't spend time tearing others down. People often say that if someone constantly posts about their relationship, it might mean they're insecure or not truly happy. We've all seen people brag about things they're secretly insecure about. This shows that **when we focus on making ourselves happy, we reduce the amount of negativity in the world,** which ultimately decreases harm in general.

Since every action we take has an impact, and we can't control all of these outcomes, our **participation in society is never truly voluntary.** We make choices daily, and whether or not we've carefully considered our intentions, other people and the world still experience the outcomes. These outcomes ripple through society, collectively shaping the world we all share.

So, while there's understandable skepticism about altruism or the idea of everyone working together, **pursuing our own best interests actually aligns with contributing positively to society.** Even if we wanted to judge actions morally, if our goal is to be "selfish," then true selfishness isn't about seeking power or causing harm. None of us sees ourselves as villains, so from our own point of view, **the most self-serving thing we can do is to be intentional about our role in society.**

And if we don't, or we're not? It won't erase the impact—our choices still influence outcomes beyond our control. People will still judge our intentions and results, and we will still live with the

consequences of our choices. **In the end, that responsibility doesn't change.** So it doesn't really matter if you work for positive change or not. The outcomes will equal the same eventually. Personally though, I can't sit by and let things stay the way they are, especially if all I have to do is focus on me.

Addressing Religious Perspectives

Real quick, I want to address religious apprehension to these ideas, as I understand this perspective well.

If you believe you were created by a divine being who has set strict rules for you to follow, even if these rules don't align with your happiness—because pleasing your creator takes precedence over personal fulfillment—then you're coming from a different standpoint. I understand why this mindset might conflict with Sociointentionalism

If we were created, it's likely there was a purpose behind our creation, meaning **there could be specific things our creator might want from us.** However, considering that all current religious structures are based on human interpretations, along with centuries of revisions and rewrites, I find it illogical to live and die solely based on presumed intentions of a creator. This isn't because those intentions don't hold importance, but rather because **it's impossible to be certain of what is truly accurate or relevant.**

If there's an afterlife or something that happens after death, we have no control over it. Even if you fully trust in your religious texts, **your creator could still have other intentions.** And if you respect this creator's authority, then it follows that their intentions will unfold regardless of your actions. This acceptance means relinquishing control over what happens after death, as the creator ultimately holds that choice. If they chose to change their mind, they'd have the right to do so, as they are beyond human morals by virtue of being our creator.

For me, though, **I don't believe anyone should be above morals,** given my strong moral beliefs. Growing up with strict religious doctrine, I see how many people benefit from structured guidance. However, all of this leads me to struggle with the concept of a

creator who would be cruel. And unless this creator directly communicates with all of us, ensuring we're all on the same page, **it would be cruel to punish us for unknowingly falling short of their intentions.**

As a result, I can't believe in a creator I'd feel compelled to rebel against. So, whether or not a creator exists, I can only follow what makes the most sense to me. I trust and believe in a creator, and if they haven't provided direct instructions, and if they hold moral principles like I do, then **their intention would be for us to live in alignment with our natural inclinations in lieu of clear instruction.**

What's natural for us, as we observe in evolution, is change and adaptation. Animals grow and evolve into new forms, like our own hands, which adapt in water as our fingers wrinkle to give us better traction. The main characteristic that separates us from other animals appears to be our intellect—our ability to reflect, innovate, and apply technology to extend our abilities.

Technology has enabled us to create advancements like AI and to mass-produce resources. For instance, in the U.S., about 30–40% of the food supply is wasted, showing our capacity to produce abundance, though often inefficiently. **This suggests that developing technology is a part of our natural trajectory.** Instead of succumbing to environmental limits, early humans used animal skins for warmth, demonstrating our instinct to use tools for survival and comfort.

This implies that **progress might be our purpose,** especially since we weren't given an instruction manual, and making ourselves miserable doesn't lead to thriving populations or advance our **natural tendencies of growth, evolution, and creation.** If we do have a purpose or if a creator has given us one, it seems that purpose is to collaborate and maximize our potential for growth and innovation.

It also suggests that communication and connection are essential to our natural order. By cooperating, we fulfill our social and emotional needs, which are regulated by brain chemicals that we can only fully experience within a community. In this way, **progress, cooperation, and connection appear to be central to**

our natural state and purpose.

Our natural state, then, would involve using technology to strengthen community and intentionally building a society that meets our needs by leveraging the resources and advancements we've created. This is why **decisions that benefit the planet are crucial;** for us to thrive, these resources need to endure, supporting our natural drive to build, create, and find community to satisfy our needs.

This perspective could appeal to highly religious people as well. There's no inherent conflict between pursuing what benefits and fulfills you personally and the intentions of a Creator—unless, of course, your beliefs explicitly dictate otherwise. **Focusing deliberately on your own self-interest is ultimately beneficial for you, and in my view, would fulfill the purpose of your creation to the best of your ability, given the information you have as a single human navigating life on this planet.**

Overcoming Fear

It's clear that making this kind of change is possible, and the moral foundation for doing so is solid. **The outcome—benefiting everyone—would, in turn, benefit each individual.** So, what's the barrier? For me, it came down to fear: fear of doing it wrong, making mistakes, causing more problems, and ultimately, the fear of still not finding happiness.

What counteracts fear, though? Knowledge and a clear plan. When you understand what you're embarking on, it builds confidence and hope. Knowing why something is happening isn't enough to make progress; beating yourself up for being afraid doesn't help either. **The only logical step is to gain the knowledge needed to reduce that fear.**

What blocks us from gaining this knowledge? Often, it's limited resources, time, and energy—essentials that societies focused on consolidating power intentionally restrict. That's why schools sometimes feel like time sinks instead of places for genuine learning. **It's why books get banned instead of being discussed openly.** A society built on keeping power can't afford for people to

see alternative paths, **as those paths would distribute power more equitably.**

This is why our society has barriers to knowledge, making it feel as though literature and ideas are difficult to access, something you have to "earn" to be accepted into. **The message is that ideas need to be "earned" to have value.**

Ultimately, the barriers come down to resources and time. Resources include the energy we can spend learning, and time is often taken up by the need to work and earn the money required to access knowledge.

The real barrier, I've realized, is having information presented in a way that's easily digestible, with clear instructions on how to get started, even when time and energy are limited.

It's like going to the gym for the first time—you might feel drained initially, but by the tenth visit, you might feel invigorated. **We actually gain energy from doing things that require it,** as long as the activity brings us to a place of satisfaction, whether internal or physical. **Burnout happens when we continue doing things that no longer fulfill us.** In contrast, doing what we love—or even just what benefits us—gives us more "spoons," more energy, to continue.

With satisfaction, fear naturally decreases. And when fear fades, there's less pressure to be perfect or control outcomes. **At that point, we're really living.**

Since improvement only comes from taking action, starting at any time is the best choice. **Feeling guilty about your choices and their outcomes as if you had full control over them is pointless.** Either no one is judging you, or whoever might be judging you has your best interests at heart (so you should pursue what's fulfilling), or they don't have your best interests at heart (so their judgment doesn't matter).

Progress is progress, however small. In a society focused on power, numbers, and quantifying success, we hear sayings like "doing a job halfway is as good as not doing it." But this isn't logical; **even something halfway done is more than not done at all**—it means

there's less work left to do. **So, if you've done even one thing today, you've moved forward.**

This resonates with me personally because I was raised in a very religious environment and often felt guilty. Knowing the "right thing" and not acting on it brought guilt. I realized I wouldn't be able to shake this feeling until I gave my best shot at doing what I needed to do. If I am to truly be happy and fulfilled in my life, I need to connect and be understood. I also need to love myself and prioritize my own fulfillment. This project is leading me toward both goals.

Moving Forward

So, this is why I think you should keep reading. I'm going to break down Sociointentionalism (SI) and Egomeritism (EM) and discuss practical ways to navigate these mindsets. I'll use narratives to illustrate each point and reference media that's inspired this work, as well as examples that can help clarify each idea. **Again, I'm nobody, so I thank you for getting this far.** If this doesn't seem like your kind of thing, I completely understand! I wish you the best.

If this has resonated so far, I hope the rest of the book can be a helpful guide to further understanding this philosophy as well as a step by step on how to put this mindset into action each day. I've done my best to make it as palatable as possible, but I'm one person. I hereby give permission to anyone who wants to simplify these ideas so others can understand them. **I encourage videographers and other artists and scholars to challenge these ideas so that they might find their perfect form.** My goal is to help push us all forward. If this inspires you, please take it an run with it. I have no interest in hording credit. This book is under my control. The rest is for the world.

Who's This Joker Anyway??

I'm not a philosopher in the traditional sense. I'm an ordinary person who has spent much of my life observing the world around me in a state of confusion. Like many of you, I've grappled with the complexities of life, trying to make sense of the motivations that

drive us and the systems that shape our society. I'm not coming to you with a formal background in philosophy or grand credentials—**I'm just someone who wanted to discover a better way forward for myself,** to find happiness, and to make sense of a world that often feels contradictory and overwhelming.

For a long time, I felt unqualified to share my thoughts. Who was I, an ordinary person, to publish a book about philosophy? But as I delved into the research, explored different perspectives, and crafted the principles of Sociointentionalism, I realized that **it would be against my own philosophy to consider myself unworthy of sharing my ideas.** This book isn't about telling you how to live; it's simply one of many views on the world and society, meant to be taken with a grain of salt.

As a storyteller at heart, I've decided to do something that feels natural, albeit unorthodox and unprofessional for this type of literature. The sources of inspiration and information for this project will be listed at the end, in no particular format. These sections will include the variety of media that has shaped my mindset over the years. I'm not an academic writer, and I won't pretend to be. I simply hope that readers will be open to exploring these ideas, and their sources.

I encourage you to explore your own personal philosophy and share it with the world, too. Your perspective, like mine, is valuable, and the act of expressing it can be a powerful tool for growth and connection. **This book isn't the definitive answer**—it's just one stepping stone among many on the path of understanding. I hope it inspires you to dig deeper, question more, and continue exploring the various ways to see the world.

Let this not be your only exploration of philosophy. Use it as a starting point, a companion, or even just a fleeting moment of reflection. Seek out other philosophies, challenge your thinking, and most importantly, stay curious. We are all navigating this journey together, and our collective insights can help us find a better way forward.

Introducing SI and EM

This book introduces two core concepts: **Sociointentionalism (SI) and Egomeritism (EM).** SI focuses on intrinsic motivations and community support, encouraging us to live authentically and connect with others in meaningful ways. EM, on the other hand, represents extrinsic motivations and hierarchy, driving us to seek validation through status, wealth, and external rewards. Understanding the differences between these mindsets is key to shifting towards a more fulfilling and equitable way of living.

My Goal

The goal of this book is to explore how EM has become the predominant mentality in our society and how it affects various aspects of our lives—from our careers to our personal relationships and even our sense of self-worth. By understanding the impact of EM, we can begin to see the ways it limits us, keeps us disconnected, and perpetuates systems of inequality.

But this isn't just about pointing out the problem; it's about offering a way forward. This book will suggest practical steps you can take in your own life to shift towards SI. It's not about doing things for others or chasing after tangible rewards—**it's about making choices that make you proud and fulfilled.** When we all start living with intention, focusing on our intrinsic values, we naturally create a society that supports and uplifts everyone.

Contrary to popular belief, ordinary people don't commit crimes or mistreat others just for fun; they do it to address a lack. By filling those gaps with intrinsic fulfillment and community support, we can build a world where people act out of genuine care for themselves and others.

Please keep in mind that this project in its final form is more of a collection of essays than anything. These were all written at separate times and were combined as the project found shape. As such, please don't worry about the continuity of the *My Story* sections.

Roadmap

- **Part 1** will define the key terms and introduce the core tenets

of Sociointentionalism (SI) and Egomeritism (EM).

- **Part 2** will illustrate the effects of EM on our world through fictional scenarios, highlighting how these motivations impact our everyday lives.
- **Part 3** will provide tangible goals and practical steps to help you shift towards SI, offering guidance on how to cultivate a life and community rooted in intrinsic motivations.
- **Part 4** will feature a list of SI Challenges, a reiteration of key information for quick reference, as well as sources and inspiring media.

I hope this book will inspire you to look within, reflect on your motivations, and consider how your choices affect not only your own life but the lives of those around you. Together, we can redefine what it means to succeed, connect, and truly live.

Part 1: Understanding SI and EM

Chapter 1: Defining Sociointentionalism

Sociointentionalism (SI) emphasizes living a life guided by intrinsic motivations and personal values. It prioritizes actions driven by genuine interest, passion, and fulfillment rather than external validation. SI promotes community support, ethical intentionality, fairness, and balance, aiming to build authentic relationships and foster holistic well-being. **The ultimate goal of SI is to achieve personal growth and satisfaction, contributing to a more equitable and harmonious society.**

To make this philosophy more practical, **SI introduces Tokens and Fulfillment boards.** These systems serve as tangible ways to track and celebrate actions that align with SI principles. As you read further, you'll encounter detailed guidance on creating and using these tools to transform the abstract ideas of SI into everyday practices that foster growth, connection, and well-being. It's all about acknowledging our growth and encouraging thoughtful, intentional living.

SI's core values are captured by the acronym **B.E.S.T.**, which stands for **Balanced Living**, **Ethical Intentionality**, **Self-Satisfaction**, and Total Well-Being (**"Trivita"** if you care about acronym etiquette, but don't mind made-up words).This framework provides a simple yet powerful way to remember and apply the tenets of SI.

Core Tenets of Sociointentionalism (B.E.S.T.)

1. **Balanced Living**
   Maintaining moderation in all aspects of life, including work, leisure, and relationships. Balance helps us avoid extremes

and fosters sustainable well-being.

- **Application**: Dedicate a section of your fulfillment board to balance. Add a token whenever you make a choice that prioritizes rest, harmony, or moderation in your life.

3. **Ethical Intentionality**
   Acting with positive intentions, fairness, and ethical considerations, ensuring your decisions benefit both yourself and others.

   - **Application**: Mark moments when you choose fairness or take an ethical stand, like helping someone selflessly or resolving conflicts with empathy.

5. **Self-Satisfaction**
   Pursuing actions that bring genuine fulfillment and are driven by internal motivations rather than external validation.

   - **Application**: Use your board to celebrate intrinsic joys —learning something new, spending time on a hobby, or embracing moments of pure happiness.

7. **Trivita**
   Taking a holistic approach to health by nurturing your physical, mental, and emotional well-being. (Trivita combines "vita", Latin for "life" with "tri", representing the three aspects of well-being, Mind, Body, and Spirit)

   - **Application**: Add tokens for activities that care for your whole self—whether it's exercising, meditating, or expressing creativity.

This framework gives you a starting point for building intentionality into everyday life while reinforcing the intrinsic motivations behind your actions.

Criteria for Validity in SI

One of the major issues I'd like to address with this book is the

reality that so many philosophies have been manipulated and reinterpreted over time. While I have no issue with the evolution of ideas, I don't like the fact that the mention of something like Socialism, for instance, invites so much back and forth about what Socialism even actually is. Over the years, public opinion of certain concepts can supersede their intended purpose.

As such, I'd like to be absolutely clear about SI's principles. Let this be the official qualifier of SI's original ideas. While I understand that this paragraph will do little to squash the eventual arguments, I would like to state right here that Sociointentionalism aligns with your actions if they:

- Are driven by intrinsic motivation.
- Have positive intentions and ethical considerations.
- Promote fairness, equity, and balance.
- Contribute to personal growth and well-being.
- Involve reflective decision-making.
- Are transparent and honest about motivations.

Actions do **not** align with SI if they:

- Cause unnecessary harm to others.
- Are driven by external rewards or recognition.
- Involve selfish intentions at the expense of others' well-being.
- Disregard fairness, equity, and/or balance.
- Neglect ethical considerations.
- Involve dishonesty or deception.

As author and originator of SI, I want to be clear that **SI is not a philosophy that can be truly accomplished.** The point of SI is continuous growth in terms of equity, and harmony. Any argument toward prioritizing some over others, maintaining the status quo, collecting and holding resources, sacrificing self, demonizing groups, punishment over discipline and rehabilitation, or creating and/or enforcing hierarchies, is explicitly opposed to the goals of SI. This does not imply that said arguments are unethical or incorrect by default. It simply means that they don't represent an SI mindset.

I believe in unceasing fairness, grace, generosity, and self-respect. At no point would a Sociointentionalist society, organization,

project, or person choose to not consider or ignore ethics, health, or fairness. SI's top principle is balance. If you're leaning toward a solution that knowingly overlooks the balance of goals, intentions, outcomes, or consequences on people or their environment, you are not aligning with SI principles. **There is no "good enough", so even if something aligned with SI in the past, it ceases to align the moment it stops considering as many relevant factors of the present as possible. There is only the pursuit of Sociointentionalism. We never accept that we've considered enough perspectives.**

I'd like to apologize in advance to anyone who is forced to use this page to prove their point.

Chapter 2: Defining Egomeritism

Egomeritism (EM) is a mindset that prioritizes external motivations, social hierarchies, and measurable success. **It is driven by the pursuit of recognition, status, wealth, and tangible rewards,** often at the expense of personal well-being, ethical considerations, and authentic connections. EM upholds the belief that success is earned through hard work, adherence to authority, and the accumulation of external achievements, making it a dominant force in many aspects of modern society.

At its core, **EM promotes the idea that our value is determined by what we achieve and how we are perceived by others.** It emphasizes measurable outcomes, such as grades, job titles, and income, as the primary indicators of success. This mindset often leads individuals to chase external validation, compete for social standing, and conform to societal expectations, rather than pursuing their true passions or even finding a middle ground between fulfillment and success/survival. I mean – **do you feel like the past 10 years have gotten easier or harder to focus on what makes you happy?**

EM is characterized by an all encompassing nature. There is no halfway with EM. You need to fully invest in its tenants because it is an ideology that requires the dismantling of self in order to fulfill it.

I know there are those wondering why I have created a rival philosophy to a made up philosophy. **That's a good question.**

The way I see it, we can't fight something we don't have a name for. People often struggle to act upon or against things they refuse to talk about. So while I understand what I think the problem is, the world has no reason to agree, especially when it is an unnamed concept. I think this goes beyond the usual suspects of money or human nature.

EM is the tendency to think one thing and do another. Why would your choices and your desires not line up? Because you're not thinking about yourself right now, no matter how "selfish" the resulting action is. You're worried about appeasing some interest outside of your own.

It's called Egomeritism. Now we have a name. **Now there's no excuses.**

Core Tenets of Egomeritism (EM)

1. **Measurable Success**: Valuing achievements based on tangible outcomes like money, grades, or titles.
2. **Value of Hard Work**: Emphasizing diligence and effort as primary paths to success.
3. **Community Standing**: Prioritizing social status and recognition within the community.
4. **Devaluation of Inner Wisdom:** Prioritizing practical skills and knowledge for material success, while undervaluing creativity, emotional intelligence, and pursuits that bring intrinsic joy or enrich the soul.
5. **Ambition and Progress**: Encouraging relentless personal and professional advancement.
6. **Reward and Comfort**: Seeking material rewards as measures of success.
7. **Respect for Authority and Hierarchy**: Upholding social structures and hierarchies to maintain order.

At first glance, **these tenets of EM may seem perfectly reasonable.** After all, we've been conditioned from a young age to believe that getting good grades, respecting authority, working hard, and following the rules will lead to a successful life. These principles are ingrained in us as the standard path to achievement and fulfillment.

However, reality often falls short of these expectations. Many of us strive to follow this path, only to find ourselves feeling unfulfilled, disconnected, or stuck in cycles of burnout. We are told that this is **simply the way the world works,** but it's worth asking: **Why does it have to be this way? And is there a better way forward?**

I'm certain that some readers are thinking that Egomeritocratic behavior is simply humanity's natural state. After all, **survival is often dependent on a group's ability to act on one accord. Hierarchy and adherence to societal expectations keep people on the same page.**

My response to this line of thinking is that almost nothing we do as humans is natural anymore, and as we inch closer and closer toward a post-scarcity world, our **desperate adherence to hierarchy becomes necessarily more deliberate.**

How often have you heard someone claim that the way to prevent their children from "following the wrong path" is to limit their knowledge of alternative schools of thought, and limit their exposure to different types of people? That says to me that we've reached a point where **our labels and groups serve as dividers** and reasons to avoid social growth, rather than naturally occurring organizational structures for a functioning society.

So again, if there are other ways of living that don't involve creating and maintaining walls and boxes, why are we focused on preventing this evolution? Is it not humanity's natural state to change how we interact with each other and with our world in order to improve our way of life? **If these labels and groups are preventing us from growing, why do we insist on holding on to them?**

This book aims to explore these questions, challenge the status quo, and offer a different perspective on what it means to live a successful and fulfilling life. By understanding both SI and EM, you'll be equipped to make more intentional choices that reflect your true values and lead you towards a life that feels genuinely rewarding.

In the meantime, consider this: **If you could instantly discover the one thing that would bring you true fulfillment and happiness for the rest of your life, but the entire world viewed it as foolish, would you still pursue it?**

EM Disclaimer

You will not find the word “Egomeritist” anywhere else in this book. To me, there is no such thing. In 2024, none of us work to actively perpetuate Egomeritism. The way we as people think—on the world scale—perpetuates EM.

SI is a philosophy that calls people to action. I believe EM to simply be a description of our current world. It is not an opposing group or a villain. There is no right or wrong, in my view, when it comes to how humans have formatted our societies, and thus advocating for a particular way of life is equally as neutral.

I’m not writing this book to add a label to the bucket or draw more lines in the sand. We are all striving for the best quality of life we can secure. How we do that is all that matters. Anyone can be a Sociointentionalist in as large or small a measure as they see fit, so long as they are doing their best to adhere to its principles.

Generally speaking, I am not in favor of using SI as a gotcha in a debate or as a weapon to use against people who don’t seem as “good” as you. Anyone attempting to use it for those purposes would be ignoring balance and ethics.

On Sometimes Being the Only One

A billionaire gave a nazi salute on TV last night.

The world feels heavier, more volatile. It’s exhausting to live in a time where asking, “What are we doing about these problems?” gets you laughed at, ignored, or even alienated. I feel like Casey from *Tomorrowland* **(A great film we all missed because of EM!)**—raising my hand in a classroom that refuses to call on me. All I want is to address the problems and work toward solutions, but the response is often dismissive or combative.

You’ll be perceived as difficult for pointing out what’s wrong and suggesting change. You’ll argue with people, not about whether they should prosper, but why they resist you for wanting them to. It’s draining to take initiative, to fight battles you’d rather not fight, all while holding onto the belief that the work matters. **That’s the reality of knowing things need to change and having the drive to act.**

Sociointentionalism (SI) is about getting us all there—building a world where this weight isn't carried by a few, but shared collectively. Until that day, though, there will be pressure to give up and go back to the familiar. The systems we live in are designed to keep us there, after all. They rely on complacency, exhaustion, and **the assumption that nothing can change.**

But SI challenges that assumption. It's about deliberate action to streamline the process of collective healing. **My dream is for it to be easy to tell who's on your team**—not by what they say, but by what they do. A Sociointentionalist isn't defined by hard rules, but by their commitment to working for balance, ethical intentionality, self-satisfaction, and trivita—for themselves and their communities. That kind of deliberate, values-driven action has the power to transform relationships and build trust in ways we desperately need.

If you've struggled to find community or to make friends who truly understand you, SI can be a way forward. Two people dedicated to these principles, with no rigid expectations beyond preserving and nurturing their connection, can create something meaningful. That's powerful. **That's what I need, and I believe I'm not the only one.**

But let me be clear: this doesn't mean the road will be easy or free of danger. I don't know what you should do if you are attacked, if the government comes for your rights, or if the fear of standing out in a broken system overwhelms you. All I know is that a Sociointentionalist will strive to make the best decision, regardless of the stakes. That's what this philosophy is for—not to offer easy answers, but to guide us toward intentional, thoughtful action in the face of uncertainty.

SI asks us to hold onto hope, even when the world seems designed to make us let go. It calls for courage—not just to act, but to keep acting when it feels thankless. To raise your hand, even if no one calls on you. To keep pushing forward, even when it would be easier to sit down.

I want to live in a world where I can trust people again. Where we can look at each other and know, without words, that we're on the same side. That we're building something better, together. Until

then, all I can ask is that we each do our best to embody these principles. To be deliberate. **To be intentional.** And to never, ever give up.

"It's hard to have ideas and easy to give up" – Casey (Tomorrowland)

Chapter 3: Historical and Cultural Context

"I love you so much, Fiyero, you just don't understand. Being born with a talent or an inclination for goodness is the aberration." - Elphaba (Wicked novel)

A Reflection on the Cynthia Erivo Fan Poster Controversy

This past year has been filled with characters standing against a crowd of people begging to be heard. *Wicked* was my top movie of 2024, not only because I love *The Wizard of Oz* and all related media, but because of the ways everything inside and outside of the film's runtime have lined up with important lessons I've been trying to learn and relay to you all. With that in mind, I'm not going to waste paper rehashing every detail, but bare with me.

The debate over whether Cynthia Erivo overreacted to that fan poster seems endless. But honestly, trying to justify one side or the other feels pointless—it's all shaped by your personal experiences: your connection to her, the show, the artist, art itself, or even how you see the world. At the end of the day, Cynthia is a person, and being a person in this world means constantly being scrutinized—for who you are, how you present yourself, or both. And only you truly know the answer to one of those questions.

Think about it: What happens when people assume things about you? Not once or twice, but over and over again? What if those assumptions snowball, coming not just from one person, but from your entire family, your friend group, or strangers on the internet? What if people who share your identity, who look like you or live like you, are treated a certain way online? Does that make you angry? Have you ever misread something someone posted online and jumped to conclusions, maybe even ranted about it?

If we know this dynamic exists—if we see it happen time and time again—why don't we account for it? Why don't we plan around it?

Instead, we churn out article after article dissecting whether Cynthia had a right to be upset. These articles don't solve anything—they just frame the situation as a conflict, inviting people to weigh in. And what happens when people weigh in? They pick sides.

Once sides are picked, defensiveness follows. People dig their heels in, aligning themselves with a team. That defensiveness often turns into anger, and before you know it, strangers are screaming at each other online about one person's feelings about a piece of art.

If we already know how this cycle plays out, **why don't we change it?** Sure there is the publisher's or the social media company's pursuit of money that gets the article in front of us, but that doesn't explain the eagerness to jump into the fray.

We could shame each other endlessly for engaging in this behavior, but what does that accomplish? It just adds another article, another comment, another rant to the pile. The real question is: **what's at the root of this behavior?** Why does it keep happening? And how can we, collectively, do better?

To understand why Egomeritism (EM) has become so deeply embedded in our society, it's important to consider how historical and cultural forces may have shaped the way we think about success, value, and motivation. While we can't pinpoint every influence with certainty, we can speculate about how various societal structures, historical shifts, and cultural narratives have contributed to the rise of our Egomeritocratic society.

Also, keep in mind that I am not a historian...

How I Think EM Became Predominant in Society

The predominance of EM likely didn't happen overnight. Instead, it seems to have evolved gradually, influenced by various historical events, economic systems, and cultural shifts. One possibility is that as societies grew more complex, with increased trade, wealth accumulation, and social stratification, there was a **natural shift**

toward valuing measurable success and social standing. In simpler, communal societies, success might have been defined more by one's contributions to the community or the quality of relationships, but as societies became more hierarchical, extrinsic rewards such as wealth, titles, and power likely began to take precedence.

Another potential factor could be the development of organized labor and market economies, where the value of individuals became closely tied to their productivity and output. As work became more specialized and competitive, the idea of personal worth became increasingly linked to professional achievements, income, and status. Over time, these values may have solidified into societal norms, encouraging people to view their success primarily through the lens of external validation.

What's So Important about Extrinsic Rewards?

Throughout history, various societies appear to have placed high value on extrinsic motivations, often linking personal worth to social status, wealth, or power. For example, in feudal systems, one's position in the hierarchy—whether as a noble, merchant, or peasant—largely dictated their value and opportunities in life. **Wealth and land ownership were not only measures of success but also key determinants of one's influence and respect within the community.**

Remember that the surname "Smith" comes directly from the profession of "blacksmith". In a world where your utility to your community is literally your name, it is no wonder that we forgot that how we define ourselves holds just as much power.

Similarly, the rise of empires often brought with them narratives of conquest and expansion, where power and domination were seen as ultimate goals. Leaders who amassed wealth, territory, and military might were celebrated, reinforcing the idea that success was something that could be seen, measured, and compared.

Even in ancient trade hubs, the exchange of goods, spices, and precious metals likely fostered a mindset where wealth accumulation and material success became markers of status.

Merchants and traders who could display their wealth through lavish homes, clothing, and possessions were often respected and admired, perpetuating the belief that **success was tied to what one could visibly acquire.**

Narratives That Support EM

Narratives—stories, myths, and ideologies—often reflect and reinforce societal values, and it's possible that many of these narratives have supported the rise of EM. In numerous cultures, tales of self-made heroes, ambitious leaders, and powerful rulers celebrate the pursuit of greatness through external achievements. These stories can subtly reinforce the idea that worth is something to be earned and displayed, rather than something inherent. After all, a story about a guy who likes everything he's done, but lives and dies unknown to the world wouldn't be very exciting.

Modern media and advertising also seem to play a role in perpetuating EM. From a young age, many people are exposed to messages that equate happiness with owning the latest products, achieving career success, or maintaining a certain lifestyle. **Celebrities, influencers, and public figures often embody the ideals of EM,** showcasing lives filled with luxury, recognition, and apparent success. These cultural narratives can create a sense of pressure to conform, pushing individuals to seek external validation as the primary means of defining their worth.

Even in education systems, the emphasis on grades, awards, and measurable outcomes can **foster an early belief that success is about competition,** achievement, and standing out. Students learn to equate their value with their performance, often prioritizing external rewards over genuine learning and self-discovery.

Think about your proudest achievement. If nobody saw it or knew about it, would it stop bringing you pride?

Reflecting on EM's Cultural Roots

While these are just speculations, they highlight how complex the rise of EM in society might be. It's a confluence of historical shifts, economic structures, and cultural storytelling that has likely made

extrinsic motivations a dominant force in our lives. Recognizing these influences can help us question the narratives we've been taught and open up new ways of thinking about success, value, and what it means to live a fulfilling life. As we continue exploring SI, the goal is to reframe these motivations, fostering a more balanced and intrinsically driven way of living.

Part 2: The Effects of EM on Society

My Story: Math, Popularity, and Other Childhood Nightmares

I've never loved myself. I can't honestly say I've hated myself all the time, but I know for certain love wasn't there. I'm starting this part of the book this way because, before I convince you that Sociointentionalism (SI) is worth considering, I need to show you how Egomeritism (EM) has shaped me—how it shapes all of us—and why we need to understand it to move forward.

Growing up, I felt like something about me was broken. I was sick a lot, battling asthma and every cold that passed through my school. My parents were constantly worried about my health, treating me like I might not make it to adulthood, and that anxiety shaped me. At school, kids made it clear I wasn't normal. I wasn't athletic, I wasn't popular, and I didn't quite "get it." I studied people like I was observing a foreign species, trying to decode what made them so naturally acceptable.

Eventually, I decided intelligence would be my strength. If I couldn't keep up on the field or in conversations about the latest trends, I'd be the smartest person in the room. That idea felt safe, like armor. It gave me a sense of worth, but it also made me arrogant. I thought people who didn't share my verbal or intellectual skills were just like the bullies I'd faced growing up. I built a wall around myself, justifying my superiority by assuming they were cruel because they couldn't think as deeply or speak as sharply as I did.

But then high school came, and the illusion shattered. I hit a wall in math, struggling with anything beyond Algebra I. Numbers made me panic. I was failing physics. For the first time, I couldn't coast through my classes or lean on cleverness to get by. My grades

plummeted, and I was scolded for not trying hard enough. I felt like *nothing*. If I wasn't smart, then what was I?

Here's the thing: At no point did I ever think my worth could come from anywhere else. My value was tied entirely to the label I'd chosen for myself—a label I'd constructed in response to how others treated me. The kids at school picked their labels too: athletes, achievers, trendsetters. We all clung to these identities, and failing to maintain them became a personal crisis.

That's the trap of Egomeritism. EM forces us to define ourselves by external measures, whether it's grades, skills, or status. It demands we stick to those definitions, no matter how much we change or how unsustainable they become. And the cruelest part? It starts early, when we're just kids navigating evolving self-images and enormous social pressures with underdeveloped minds. No one teaches us to question the labels or see beyond them.

So we grow up clinging to those same rigid ideas of success and identity, carrying them into adulthood like baggage we don't even realize we're holding. EM doesn't just tell us who to be; it makes us believe that *who we are is not enough*.

But what if it didn't have to be this way? What if fulfillment and happiness came from within, not from meeting external expectations? What if we could unlearn the lessons EM teaches us and rediscover what really matters?

Let's explore that in the next chapter, where we'll break down what personal fulfillment and happiness look like under Egomeritism—and what they could be under Sociointentionalism.

From here we will dive into some example scenarios. These are inspired by real people but are nothing more than fictional illustrations of SI's approach to life. Please take these with a grain of salt but compare their messages to your real life where applicable.

Chapter 4: Personal Fulfillment and Happiness

My Story: Pizza, Pride, and Letting Yourself Like What You Like

If we're going to talk about how Egomeritism affects pursuits of personal fulfillment, let's start with something universal: food.

My best friend and I love pizza. Even during the worst of times, we make it a point to get one every week to keep spirits high. For most of the last year, our go-to spot has been Little Caesars. It's close to our house, affordable compared to other options nearby, and—let me just say it—the pizza is *damn good*. The sauce has this subtle, spicy kick that I really enjoy, and honestly, for the price, it's hard to beat.

Depending on where you live, you might be nodding along, shaking your head in disagreement, or scrunching your face in disgust. My bestie was one of those "disgust" people—before they'd even tried it. Why? Because Little Caesars has the reputation of being "cheap pizza." Even after eating there a few times and *enjoying* it, we still caught ourselves making jokes about how we were "settling" for subpar pizza.

At some point, I stopped and thought about how ridiculous this was. Here we were, savoring every bite, but still ranking it lower on some imaginary pizza hierarchy because of its reputation. And the kicker? The judgment wasn't even based on the food itself. It stemmed entirely from societal attitudes about price and status. Growing up, I'd heard the same negative reactions, and it had kept me from even *trying* Little Caesars for years.

This is Egomeritism in action. It keeps you from fully enjoying what you genuinely like because it pressures you to align your

preferences with the masses rather than your own experience. It's the mindset that tells you it's better to dislike something with the crowd than to love it on your own. And we all perpetuate it, often without thinking, by cracking subtle jokes or dismissing things we enjoy because they don't fit into some arbitrary standard of quality.

Think about it—what's your version of this? Is there something you genuinely love but feel embarrassed to admit because it's "lowbrow" or not deemed worthy of respect? It could be food, music, a hobby—anything. Maybe you've even hidden your enjoyment just to avoid ridicule, even when there's nothing wrong with the thing itself.

It took being poorer than ever for me to discover my favorite brand of pizza. Imagine how much money and joy I could have saved if someone had just given me an honest review of the *food* instead of reinforcing some unspoken hierarchy.

Egomeritism thrives on these subtle judgments, but the lesson here is simple: Let yourself like what you like. You don't owe the world an explanation for your preferences, and your enjoyment shouldn't be dimmed by anyone else's opinions. It's your life, your taste buds, your fulfillment. Own it.

As you read this book, take a moment to notice any apprehension you feel toward its suggestions. Ask yourself—are you hesitant because you doubt these ideas will truly bring fulfillment? Or are you holding back because they feel "cringe"? And if it's the latter, consider how many other "cringe" things you might be avoiding that could actually help you. What might change if you could pursue them despite how others—or even you—might feel?

The Struggle for Authenticity

Happiness is a deeply personal journey, influenced by our values, desires, and the way we see ourselves in the world. In a society that constantly tells us who to be and how to act, staying true to oneself can be a challenge. We often grapple with external pressures, social expectations, and the desire to fit in, all of which can pull us away from what genuinely brings us joy. This chapter explores the complexities of personal fulfillment and how aligning our actions

with our intrinsic motivations can lead to a more authentic and happy life.

Through the story of Lily, we'll see how the struggle between self-expression and external validation can shape our happiness and how Sociointentionalism (SI) can help us navigate these choices.

Lily's Story

Lily is a 16-year-old high school student who feels out of place in her own world. She's creative, loves to experiment with fashion, and enjoys expressing herself through bold, unconventional outfits. Unfortunately, in an effort to conform, Lily often finds herself dressing down to fit in. Her friends stick to the latest trends, and she can't help but feel the pressure to blend in rather than stand out.

Recently, Lily has been thinking about dyeing her hair bright blue—a color that makes her feel alive and uniquely herself. She's excited by the idea, but the voices of doubt creep in. What will her friends think? Will she be teased? Will her parents approve? For Lily, this decision isn't just about hair; it's about the fear of standing out in a world that constantly pushes her to conform.

What Motivates Lily?

Before we explore how Lily can use Sociointentionalism (SI) to guide her decision, it's important to recognize the variety of motivations driving her:

- **Desire for Self-Expression and Authenticity**: Lily feels most herself when she's expressing her unique style. The idea of dyeing her hair isn't just a whim—it's a form of self-expression that feels true to who she is.
- **Need for Social Acceptance and Belonging**: Like most teenagers, Lily wants to fit in with her peers. She worries that being too different will lead to rejection or judgment, which makes her hesitate to embrace her bold ideas.
- **Fear of Criticism and Judgment**: Lily's fear isn't just about her friends. She worries about her parents' reaction and the opinions of strangers. The thought of negative attention

makes her question whether it's worth the risk.
- **Seeking Personal Confidence and Joy**: Beyond the external pressures, Lily knows that expressing herself in her own way brings her joy and confidence. She craves the freedom to be herself without constantly second-guessing her choices.

These motivations reflect both intrinsic and extrinsic influences, highlighting the tension Lily feels between staying true to herself and seeking acceptance from others. Let's explore how she might navigate this decision using SI principles.

Applying SI Principles to Lily's Decision

Lily decides to pause and reflect using the six SI Questions, designed to help her align her choices with her intrinsic values while considering the impact on herself and others:

1. **Intrinsic Motivation: Will this make me happy or just someone else?**

    - Lily asks herself whether dyeing her hair is something she genuinely wants or if it's influenced by trying to prove a point. She realizes that her desire isn't about impressing others; it's about embracing her individuality and finding happiness in self-expression.

3. **Positive Intentions: Is it my intention to produce the most good possible?**

    - Lily reflects on her intentions behind the change. She recognizes that her motivation is pure—she wants to feel more like herself, not to upset others or rebel. Her intention is simply to bring more joy into her life.

5. **Fairness and Perspective: Is this fair to everyone involved, including myself, and have I considered others' perspectives?**

    - Lily considers how her choice might affect her relationships. She thinks about her parents' concerns and how her friends might react. While she understands

these perspectives, she also realizes that continually compromising her self-expression isn't fair to herself.

7. **Personal Growth: Does this contribute to my growth—mentally, physically, or spiritually?**

    - She evaluates whether embracing her unique style will help her grow. Lily knows that taking this step will build her confidence, helping her develop a stronger sense of self and resilience against external pressures.

9. **Long-Term Outcomes: Have I thought through the long-term outcomes, and am I okay with them?**

    - Lily imagines the possible outcomes: some people might not like her choice, but others might admire her courage. She feels that the potential personal satisfaction and growth outweigh the temporary discomfort of others' opinions.

11. **Honesty and Bias: Am I being honest with myself and aware of any biases in my decision?**

    - Finally, Lily checks in with herself to ensure she's making this decision for the right reasons. She acknowledges her fear of judgment but recognizes that the desire to express herself authentically is stronger. She's honest about wanting to find joy and confidence in being true to herself.

Where Does This Leave Lily?

Lily's decision isn't just about changing her hair color; it's about embracing who she is despite the pressures to conform. Using SI principles, Lily navigates her motivations with honesty and intention, ensuring that her choice aligns with her true self. The SI approach doesn't dismiss the need for social acceptance but encourages her to find a balance where self-expression and respect for others coexist.

If Lily were to follow only external motivations, she might continue

to play it safe, blending in and avoiding risks. This could keep her comfortable but leave her feeling disconnected from her authentic self. By applying SI, Lily finds a way to honor her desire for self-expression without completely disregarding the needs of those around her.

What Would You Choose?

Lily's journey is a reminder that **happiness often lies in the spaces where we feel most ourselves.** What would you do if you were in her shoes? How do you navigate the balance between being true to yourself and seeking acceptance from those around you?

Would your friends accept you if you suddenly changed your appearance, or maybe started expressing an interest outside of the norm? EM pressures us to do what is expected, so much so that many of us forget what it is we actually want. Plenty of people have careers that they are good at, but not ones they love. How many people love what they do, and how many have always been on a set path, and would feel strange if they changed it?

What is the point of living a life devoid of true expression? The way I see it, I'm only here for a set time. In that time, I'd prefer to have done the things that made me feel good rather than feeling uneasy, attempting to please others and fit into the status quo. **At the end of the day, what really happens if someone doesn't like you?** And do you really want to be associated with people who would stop liking you if you changed something that only affects you?

Use the SI questions to explore your own choices and discover what brings you the most fulfillment. Your happiness doesn't have to fit into a box—it just has to feel right for you.

SI Questions Disclaimer:(There sure are a lot of these)

It is my obviously biased belief that the 6 SI Questions can be attributed to any decision or situation. I worked to cover all the bases, but this method is not going to work for everyone. Just keep in mind that these are meant to get you used to asking yourself questions and being intentional with your actions. Nothing more.

Practical Tips: Breaking Down the Barriers to Personal Fulfillment

Fashion trends don't emerge out of thin air—they're often born when someone dares to step outside the boundaries of what's considered acceptable. We love seeing innovators succeed, whether it's through a bold new style or an artistic expression that challenges conventions. Yet, despite our admiration for those who break the mold, we often tell ourselves and others to stick with what's safe, familiar, and acceptable.

Art in general is a space where we celebrate the expression of human thought and emotion, yet there remains an unspoken hierarchy of "better" and "worse" forms of art. These judgments create invisible barriers that hold us back from expressing our authentic selves. These patterns of thinking are deeply ingrained. They shape the choices we make every day, often leading us to conform rather than explore what truly makes us happy.

The practical tips below are designed to help break down these mental blocks and empower you to live more authentically. By applying these ideas in your day-to-day life, you can begin to embrace your unique path and feel more fulfilled in the choices you make.

Happiness isn't about reaching a specific destination; it's about finding joy in the process. **Fulfillment boards and tokens are tools rooted in this philosophy,** helping us embrace intrinsic joy, honor our growth, and connect with others meaningfully.

What Are Fulfillment Boards?

A **fulfillment board** is a visual tool designed to celebrate your progress and honor the actions that align with your intrinsic motivations. It's completely customizable and flexible, allowing you to track your growth in a way that feels personal and rewarding.

- **Start Simple**: Begin with a piece of paper or poster board. Dollar stores are a great resource for affordable stickers, poster boards, and supplies to get started. Stick the paper on your wall or anywhere visible as a constant reminder of your

progress.

- **Customize Your Board**: Over time, you might decide to divide it into sections for different areas of your life, like creativity, relationships, self-care, or career. These categories let you see how you're growing holistically.
- **Make It Yours**: Add tokens to your board whenever you take a step toward fulfillment. Whether the token is big, small, dull, or dazzling, choose something that **reflects how proud you are of the moment.** Recently, I found some amazing 3D stickers that look like official seals, and I used them to celebrate my progress on bigger goals.
- **Be Flexible**: If a board doesn't suit your style, put your tokens on objects, walls, or even in a journal. The system is intentionally adaptable so it can work in any space.

What Are Tokens?

I like to think of Tokens as literal Social Currency. Tokens are physical representations of effort, growth, and appreciation. They don't carry monetary value, which is precisely why they're so effective—they're rooted in meaning and intention rather than materialism. Here's how they work:

- **Celebrate Personal Wins**: Give yourself tokens when you achieve something meaningful, no matter the size. For example, finishing a creative project or choosing rest over burnout might warrant a token.
- **Encourage Others**: Tokens aren't just for you—they're also a way to honor and uplift others. Use tokens to celebrate your loved ones' growth or as a "thank you" for their contributions. I like to give my partner tokens along with cute messages on sticky notes when I'm proud of them or want to remind them how important they are. These small gestures encourage them to add stickers to their own board and continue their journey.
- **Build Community**: Tokens can strengthen relationships. Recently, I wrote love notes to my roommates and sealed them with fancy 3D stickers. The random appreciation cards brought a noticeable positive change to our interactions. SI thrives when we work together, fostering mutual

encouragement and support.

Tips for Getting Started

1. **Affordable Options**: Dollar stores offer an array of inexpensive supplies, from stickers to greeting cards and poster boards. Packs of greeting cards are an economical way to share tokens of appreciation with others in your life while keeping things heartfelt and beautiful.
2. **Find Your Style**: Tokens can be big or small, flashy or simple. Let your tokens reflect how much the action or achievement meant to you. A bold, shiny token might represent a major milestone, while a smaller, subtler one could honor a quieter, but equally meaningful moment.
3. **Keep It Visible**: Having your board in a prominent place serves as a visual reminder of your journey and progress. If you prefer privacy, keeping tokens in a journal can work just as well. The point is to engage with your system in a way that motivates and inspires you.

Fulfillment boards and tokens are tools for reframing success, shifting the focus from external validation to personal growth and authentic connection. **By celebrating small, intentional actions, you're not only honoring your own journey but also encouraging those around you to do the same.**

As we move into Chapter 5, we'll explore how the principles of Sociointentionalism (SI) help us navigate external pressures and societal expectations, empowering us to find fulfillment on our own terms. Together, let's create a world where progress is celebrated, joy is intrinsic, and connection is intentional.

On Egomeritism in Media: Blockbusters, Bias, and the Metrics of Success

I care deeply about movies, and it's fascinating (and a bit frustrating) to see how Egomeritism creeps into how we perceive and discuss them. For instance, take the visual effects in *The Wizard of Oz*. Imagine being in the audience when it premiered in 1939. Experiencing color for the first time must have been an awe-

inspiring, magical moment. It made me think about the feelings I had seeing *Avatar* or *Avengers: Endgame* in theaters. Both were monumental technical achievements in their time, and they were breathtaking to experience in the moment.

But here's the thing—can we call *Avatar* or *Endgame* the greatest stories ever told? Probably not. They were massive cultural moments, to be sure, but if you remove the spectacle, they're not necessarily the pinnacle of storytelling. Yet we treat them like benchmarks for other films, not because of their narratives, but because they made record-breaking amounts of money.

Take *Avengers: Endgame*. It's often held up as the best Marvel film—not just because fans loved it, but because it became the highest-grossing film in the franchise. But does that metric of financial success really make it the best? Since *Endgame*, every subsequent Marvel movie has been relentlessly compared to it. New characters, new villains, and fresh stories aren't judged on their own merit but rather on whether they can "live up to" a movie that was explicitly created as a grand finale for a decade-long saga. **It's an impossible standard that makes no sense if you think about it.**

So why do we do this? Why does the box office gross seem to carry more weight in the public conversation than the individual experience or artistic intent of a film?

I believe it comes down to a societal obsession with metrics of money and success. It's not just about what a film makes us feel; it's about how much money it makes, how many awards it wins, or how many people see it on opening weekend. These numbers dominate the narrative, dictating what we think is "worthy" or "important" instead of letting us form our own opinions free of those pressures.

Even beyond blockbusters, this mindset impacts how we discuss and perceive "smaller" films. We often talk as if non-blockbusters don't exist, but that's only because they're overshadowed by the money-makers. A beautiful, unique indie movie might get critical acclaim but go unnoticed because it doesn't rake in the cash. We let these metrics influence our access to and appreciation of art, deciding what's valuable based on how society validates it rather than how it speaks to us individually.

If we look at film—and art in general—through the lens of Egomeritism, we start to see how this obsession with measurable success narrows our view. It teaches us to value what is profitable over what is personal, and **that leaves so many beautiful stories and unique voices behind.**

This isn't to say that blockbusters can't be meaningful or that financial success doesn't matter. But if we keep letting these metrics dictate what we celebrate, we risk losing sight of the stories that could move us, inspire us, and change us—whether they make millions of dollars or not.

As you think about your favorite movies, shows, or books, I encourage you to ask yourself: Do I love this because of what it means to me, or because it's been framed as "the best" by society? Would I still love it if it wasn't wildly popular or critically acclaimed? Breaking free of those metrics is tough, but it's one of the ways we can reclaim our joy in art—and maybe even in life. After all, how often do you celebrate yourself despite lack of celebration from others? Do you feel more or less worthy of celebration compared to a feature film?

Chapter 5: Community Dynamics

On Understanding Without Self-Judgment

One of the hardest things to do in life is to listen to someone else's experience of us without taking it as a personal attack. It's easy to hear feedback and immediately start defending ourselves, explaining our intentions, or shutting down completely. But Sociointentionalism (SI) asks us to hold two truths at once: **we are not defined by how others perceive us, but their perceptions still matter.**

We live in a world that often forces us into rigid binaries—right or wrong, good or bad, kind or cruel. But human interaction is much more complex. One of the biggest barriers to growth is our own **pride**—the deep-seated desire to be seen as good, right, or justified. It's uncomfortable to accept that we might have hurt someone even when we had no intention of doing so. But if we let go of pride, we can begin to **listen** rather than react.

Intentions vs. Outcomes

- **Intentions** are what we mean to do.
- **Outcomes** are what actually happens.
- The **gap between the two** is often where conflict arises.

Imagine a doctor taking blood. The doctor's intention is to provide medical care, but the action still causes pain. If they dismiss the patient's discomfort because "they were just doing their job," they fail in emotional care. In the same way, when we interact with others, **our intentions don't erase our impact.** If someone says we hurt them, we can acknowledge that without needing to take it as a personal failure.

Listening Without Self-Judgment

When someone gives us feedback—especially if it's about how we made them feel—it can be difficult to hear without spiraling into self-doubt or guilt. The key is to separate **what they experienced** from **who we are.**

For example:

- Someone says, "**You were dismissive.**"
  Instead of thinking, "**I AM dismissive.**"
  You can think, "**They felt unheard by me. What was I feeling that made me come across that way?**"
  Maybe the answer is, "**I was focused on problem-solving and didn't realize they needed emotional validation first.**"
  That lets you say: "**I'm sorry that I came across as dismissive. I wasn't meaning to, but I see how that happened.**"

This way, you **acknowledge their experience without erasing your own truth.** You don't have to agree that you *are* aggressive, but you can recognize that, in that moment, your energy might have been overwhelming to them.

A New Way to Acknowledge Impact

One reason people struggle with this concept is that apologizing often feels like admitting guilt. But sometimes, we aren't guilty—we just want to acknowledge impact. Maybe what's needed isn't an apology, but a different kind of statement:

- **Reckoning** – "I reckon with the impact I had."
- **Recognition** – "I recognize that my words came across that way."
- **Resonance** – "I hear how that landed for you."
- **Attunement** – "I want to attune to how that felt for you."

These phrases allow us to express **understanding** without taking on false blame. They allow for **growth** without requiring self-judgment.

Why This Matters in SI

SI is about **community, mutual growth, and fairness.** If we want to create a world where people treat each other with care and respect, we have to be willing to hear how our actions affect others. That doesn't mean we have to accept every criticism as truth, but it does mean we should take a moment to consider **why someone might be feeling the way they do.**

At the same time, **we should extend that same grace to ourselves.** If someone tells you that you hurt them, you don't have to spiral into shame or self-hatred. You can acknowledge the impact, reflect on it, and decide how to move forward.

The goal isn't to be perfect. The goal is to be intentional.

My Story: Gardens, Gratitude, and Growing Bonds

When I first moved into my neighborhood, I didn't know anyone. I was the new face on the block, and while the occasional wave or polite nod happened, no one really stopped to chat. Wanting to break the ice, I decided to write a card for one of my neighbors, thanking them for keeping their garden so beautiful—it was one of the first things I noticed and appreciated about the area.

I kept it simple: a small thank-you card with a note inside about how much I admired their setup and how it made my walks around the neighborhood more enjoyable. I slipped the card into their mailbox and didn't think much of it after that.

A few days later, I found a bag of fresh vegetables on my porch, with a note from that neighbor. It turned out they'd noticed me working on a small vegetable patch in my yard and thought I could use some of their extras. That one small card turned into an exchange of kindness I hadn't anticipated. A genuine connection grew from a single note.

Through this, I realized how easy it is to build bridges in a community. It doesn't take grand gestures or big commitments—just a little bit of thoughtfulness can ripple outward. That's the power of intentional action, and it's what Sociointentionalism encourages us to embrace: small, meaningful choices that build a network of support and mutual growth.

Communities are complex ecosystems shaped by the motivations and values of their members. While we often envision communities as supportive networks, in reality, they can be influenced by competition, status, and personal ambition. When extrinsic motivations like status and recognition dominate, the bonds that hold communities together can weaken, leading to isolation and division. This chapter explores how different values—whether focused on wealth, status, or mutual support—affect community dynamics.

Sociointentionalism (SI) emphasizes that **prioritizing self-satisfaction isn't selfish when done with positive intentions and ethical considerations.** By focusing on our own well-being, we can also strengthen our communities. Let's explore the dynamics of two neighborhoods, Oakridge and Meadowview, to see these concepts in action. (I apologize for the massive generalizations. Conceptualizing a whole community is harder than I thought.)

The Tale of Two Neighborhoods

Meet Oakridge and Meadowview, two neighborhoods that, on the surface, appear similar. Both are filled with busy families, well-maintained homes, and ambitious individuals. Yet beneath the surface, these communities are driven by fundamentally different values.

Life in Oakridge: A Community of Status and Wealth

Oakridge is defined by its residents' pursuit of measurable success. Luxury cars line the streets, and perfectly manicured lawns signal status. In Oakridge, success is quantified by material wealth, prestigious job titles, and social recognition. Interactions often revolve around comparisons—who has the best house, the most impressive career, or the most exclusive social circle.

This focus on extrinsic motivations creates a competitive atmosphere. Neighbors are polite but distant, and social gatherings feel more like opportunities to network than genuine connections. The drive for status often leads to social isolation, as individuals feel pressured to maintain their image, leading to a community that is outwardly beautiful but inwardly disconnected.

Life in Meadowview: A Community of Mutual Support

In contrast, Meadowview thrives on mutual aid and connection. Here, success isn't measured by material possessions but by the strength of community bonds. Neighbors regularly share resources, look after each other's children, and organize events that bring everyone together. When someone faces hardship, the community rallies around them without expecting anything in return.

Meadowview isn't perfect, but its focus on intrinsic motivations—like empathy, support, and belonging—creates a resilient and inclusive environment. Residents find fulfillment not through competition but through the joy of contributing to the well-being of others. For Meadowview, the success of one is the success of all.

Applying SI and EM Principles to Community Dynamics

Oakridge and Meadowview reflect different approaches to community life, guided by the principles of Egomeritism (EM) and Sociointentionalism (SI). Let's break down the dynamics and explore how SI principles, especially the B.E.S.T. tenets, can balance personal and communal fulfillment.

Analysis of Oakridge: Guided by Egomeritism (EM)

1. **Measurable Success**: Oakridge's focus on tangible achievements, such as wealth and status, drives a culture of competition rather than collaboration. Success is outwardly displayed and celebrated, often at the cost of deeper connections.
2. **Community Standing and Recognition**: Social standing is paramount, and interactions often revolve around maintaining or enhancing one's reputation. This can create a superficial community dynamic, where appearances take precedence over authentic relationships.
3. **Fear of Falling Behind**: The pressure to conform to high standards fosters anxiety and a reluctance to show vulnerability. The need to uphold social status can overshadow opportunities for genuine connection, creating a

sense of isolation.
4. **Transactional Relationships**: Relationships are often seen as means to an end, whether it's networking for career advancement or maintaining status. This transactional approach undermines the potential for trust and mutual support.

Analysis of Meadowview: Guided by Sociointentionalism (SI) and B.E.S.T. Principles

1. **Balanced Living**: Meadowview residents maintain moderation in their pursuits, focusing on both personal well-being and community support. This balance allows individuals to thrive without compromising their relationships.
2. **Ethical Intentionality**: The community's actions are guided by positive intentions, fairness, and a commitment to supporting one another. Residents act with empathy, creating a safe space for everyone to contribute.
3. **Self Satisfaction**: Meadowview emphasizes self-satisfaction as a path to fulfillment. Residents pursue activities that bring them joy, whether it's helping a neighbor or pursuing a personal passion. This focus on intrinsic motivation strengthens the community as a whole.
4. **Trivita**: The emphasis on overall health—physical, mental, and emotional—creates a resilient community. Residents are encouraged to take care of themselves first, which in turn allows them to be present and supportive members of the group.

How SI Balances Self-Satisfaction and Community Strength

Sociointentionalism (SI) recognizes that focusing on self-satisfaction doesn't mean neglecting others. In fact, by pursuing what truly fulfills us, we can contribute more effectively to our communities. The B.E.S.T. principles guide individuals to seek a harmonious balance where personal happiness and communal support coexist.

For example, a resident of Oakridge might feel proud of their

success and want to maintain their status. SI doesn't dismiss this desire but encourages them to ask: Are my actions balanced? Are my intentions positive and fair? Does my pursuit of success contribute to my well-being and that of others? By reflecting on these questions, individuals can ensure that their personal ambitions align with the greater good.

Also, lets not forget that while Egomeritocratic systems often result in wealth and visible growth, they eventually lead people to limit themselves. **What happens when a resident of Oakridge accomplishes something that others in the community don't particularly value?** Will they continue on this path because it fulfills them, or might they abandon it for something that will result in validation from the community? **How would that resident receive the same support from their community if being different affects their status?**

When would a child growing up in Oakridge learn to self-motivate if the only examples they have are of people doing things for the sake of being recognized?

In Meadowview, residents show that taking care of oneself isn't selfish—it's necessary. When people prioritize their health, happiness, and satisfaction, they are better equipped to support those around them. This creates a feedback loop where personal and community well-being reinforce each other, leading to stronger, more connected neighborhoods which can also be wealthy, glamorous, and traditionally validated.

What Would You Choose?

Consider your own community. Are your relationships driven by status and comparison, or by mutual support and shared joy? How might your community change if you prioritized your own satisfaction while also intentionally contributing to others? Sociointentionalism encourages us to find that sweet spot where self-interest and collective good meet. What kind of community do you want to be part of, and how can you help create it?

Is there something wrong in your community? Even something as small as a pothole can cause disruption. Are you able to fill it?

Would fixing it yourself be helpful for you and for others? Why wait for someone to ask? **Why do we avoid doing things unless everyone else is doing it, or unless we are directly rewarded for doing it?**

Practical Tips: Community Dynamics

We're not obligated to do things for our community, and often that's why we don't. Obligation implies something forced, something we do because we must, not because we choose to. But responsibility is different—it's the understanding that, whether we take action or not, we are always contributing to our community. **Even inaction adds something.** By choosing not to act, we allow certain dynamics, issues, or behaviors to continue unchecked.

Our communities thrive when we recognize this responsibility and take meaningful action, even when we're not obligated to. The following tips are designed to help you reflect on your role in your community and how you can contribute intentionally, making positive choices that support both your own fulfillment and the well-being of those around you.

Creative Ways to Foster Community Using SI Methods

1. **Use Tokens to Break the Ice**
   Building a strong sense of community starts with small, intentional acts of connection. When meeting neighbors, consider giving them a token, a thank-you card, or even a homemade treat—as a gesture of appreciation for their presence in the neighborhood. A token isn't just a gift; it's a way to symbolize gratitude and create a memorable moment. You might include a brief note about how their garden brightens your day or thank them for keeping the neighborhood welcoming. These small, tangible actions can lay the foundation for meaningful relationships.
2. **Attend Local Events with Intentional Goals**
   Local events are great opportunities to foster connections, but SI encourages attending with purpose. Bring a set of thank-you cards or tokens to hand out during gatherings. Recognize organizers or participants who contribute positively to the community. This simple act not only builds your connections

but also helps others feel valued, reinforcing the bonds that hold your neighborhood together.

3. **Create a Group Fulfillment Board**
   Encourage collective reflection and collaboration by creating a shared fulfillment board. Place it in a central location and invite neighbors to add tokens for community acts of kindness or accomplishments. This board can become a living representation of the neighborhood's progress and shared achievements, fostering a sense of collective pride.
4. **Contribute to Online Communities with SI Intentions**
   Online spaces offer unique opportunities for connection. Instead of simply commenting or reacting to posts, approach these interactions with SI principles. Share a token digitally—a personalized message of appreciation, a recommendation that aligns with someone's interests, or even a graphic representation of a sticker. These small but intentional actions can build meaningful relationships even in virtual spaces.

Example: If you're part of a neighborhood Facebook group, use it to highlight others' contributions. For instance, thank someone for organizing an event or offer a resource with a thoughtful message about why it might be helpful.

Why This Works

Tokens and fulfillment boards aren't about stickers or boards themselves—they're tools to help us step out of our shells and engage with others in meaningful ways. They act as an invitation, a spark to pass the good vibes on to the next person we meet.

Imagine receiving a heartfelt card from a stranger, with a small token of kindness inside, asking you to do something kind for someone else that day. **Are you really saying no?** These small gestures create ripples of positivity that extend far beyond the initial act. By embracing these practices, you're fostering a culture of connection, gratitude, and shared joy—one interaction at a time.

What kind of community do you want to help build, and how can your actions contribute to that vision?

On Traffic, Ants, and Human Nature

When I was a kid, I used to say that I wished people were more like ants. I learned about something called a phantom traffic jam—the phenomenon where an accident on one side of the highway causes a jam on the other, even though there's no actual obstruction. Drivers slow down just to look, and that microscopic hesitation adds up, creating miles of unnecessary backup.

The same happens every day at freeway entrances and exits. People try to squeeze onto the road all at once, causing a mess. The solution is simple: if everyone matched speeds, kept a safe distance, and let cars merge like a zipper, the problem would vanish. But instead, we stop, start, and fight for position like it's some kind of race.

This behavior isn't unique to driving. Go to an airport, and you'll see it in full force. We're forced to shuffle back and forth in winding lines with barriers and signs, because without them, chaos would erupt. Someone would inevitably push ahead, cutting off others and disrupting the flow. The same thing happens when we board planes or navigate crowded spaces.

Here's my problem: We often *know* the solutions to these issues, and they're well within our personal control, but we refuse to act on them. When I'm driving and see someone tailgating or jockeying for position near an on-ramp, I make space—not because I'm a saint, but because I don't want to end up in a wreck. It's just common sense.

Think about it: When you jump lanes to get ahead in traffic, are you really getting to your destination faster? And when someone speeds past you only to end up at the same red light, don't you just roll your eyes?

Sociointentionalism isn't about being altruistic for its own sake. It's about understanding that working together benefits everyone—including yourself. Letting a car merge isn't just courteous; it makes the whole system work better. Nobody gets anywhere quickly during a traffic jam.

Ants don't get backed up. They move seamlessly toward a shared goal because they understand their place in the collective. We're supposedly smarter, yet we refuse to think of ourselves as one car

among many, all trying to keep the road usable for everyone.

So why do we keep fighting for a few feet of space when it just slows us all down? Maybe it’s time we start thinking more like ants.

Chapter 6: Work and Career

I've struggled to hold a steady job for the past two years due to severe mental health complications. To be honest, turning my philosophy into a book started as a hail Mary—a desperate attempt to create some stability for myself, including financial stability. But as I wrote, my perspective shifted. This wasn't just about survival; it became a deeper exploration of why our society values employment the way it does and how that impacts our lives.

Think about how we discuss the future of work in the media. We frame automation and AI with fear—not because these advancements are inherently bad, but because of the jobs they'll replace. Yet, logically, if no human labor goes into producing something, its cost could and should be zero. Products could, in theory, be free. But instead of seeing this as an opportunity to move away from grueling labor, our systems cling to jobs as a measure of worth.

Creating jobs isn't inherently good; eliminating unnecessary labor while ensuring people's needs are met should be the real goal. If you find yourself uncomfortable with that idea, it might be worth examining how Egomeritism (EM) has shaped your views on work and value.

In our professional lives, we often measure success by how hard we work, the titles we achieve, and the recognition we receive. Career ambitions can easily take center stage, defining not just our workdays but our sense of self. While hard work and measurable success are often celebrated, they can also leave us feeling disconnected from our deeper needs. This chapter explores the impact of extrinsic motivations—like status, ambition, and recognition—on our careers and personal lives. Through the story of Sarah, we'll examine how different motivations can shape our professional paths and what happens when our careers don't align with our intrinsic values.

Sarah's Story: The Career Dilemma

Sarah is a marketing professional in her mid-30s who seems to have it all: a prestigious role as the head of marketing at a high-profile company, a great salary, and a lifestyle that many would envy. But despite her outward success, Sarah feels a persistent sense of **emptiness.** She has everything she thought she wanted, yet something is missing.

One day, Sarah is offered an even more lucrative position at a rival company. It's an opportunity that promises a higher salary, greater visibility, and an impressive title—everything she's worked so hard to achieve. However, the role comes with long hours, constant travel, and a reputation for a cutthroat work culture. Sarah is faced with a choice that goes beyond just taking another job; it's a decision that could redefine her career and personal life.

What Motivates Sarah?

Before diving into how Sarah can use Sociointentionalism (SI) to guide her decision, let's acknowledge the different motivations at play. Sarah's desire for the new job isn't just about money or status. It's also about who she is and what she values internally:

- **Status and Pride in Achievement**: Sarah isn't chasing status solely for validation from others. **She genuinely takes pride in being recognized as a leader and a top performer in her field.** Her achievements are deeply tied to her sense of self-worth and professional identity.
- **Passion for Leadership and Influence**: Sarah loves leading teams, strategizing, and making an impact. Her motivation to take on a more influential role comes from a genuine **passion for leadership**, not just the perks that come with it.
- **Commitment to Financial Independence**: Beyond the practical need for money, Sarah values the security and freedom that financial success brings. For her, financial independence is about being able to make her own choices and support her loved ones without worry.

These are valid, deeply personal motivations that reflect both intrinsic and extrinsic values. They align with what many of us

strive for in our careers—achievement, recognition, and security. But how does Sarah decide whether to take the new job? Let's see how she might navigate this choice using SI principles.

Applying SI and EM Principles to Sarah's Decision

Sarah decides to pause and reflect using the six SI questions, designed to help align her career choices with her intrinsic values while considering external factors:

1. **Intrinsic Motivation: Will this make me happy or just someone else?**

    - Sarah realizes that while the new job could impress her peers and family, she needs to **focus on whether it genuinely makes her happy.** Does it align with her passion for leadership and making an impact, or is it primarily driven by the allure of external rewards?

3. **Positive Intentions: Is it my intention to produce the most good possible?**

    - She reflects on her intention behind taking the job. If she takes the role, will she be able to use her influence positively? Sarah considers whether the position allows her to lead in a way that feels authentic and impactful, aligning with her **desire to do meaningful work.**

5. **Fairness and Perspective: Is this fair to everyone involved, including myself, and have I considered others' perspectives?**

    - Sarah thinks about how the new job would affect her own well-being, her family, and her future team. She weighs the personal sacrifices against the potential professional gains, recognizing that **being fair to herself** is just as important as meeting the expectations of others.

7. **Personal Growth: Does this contribute to my growth—mentally, physically, or spiritually?**

- She evaluates the role's potential to challenge and develop her professionally. Sarah realizes that while the job would push her professionally, she must also consider if it nurtures her mental and emotional well-being **or if it risks burnout.**

9. **Long-Term Outcomes: Have I thought through the long-term outcomes, and am I okay with them?**

    - Sarah visualizes where this decision might lead her in five years. **Is she okay with the trade-offs she'll make?** She reflects on whether the long-term benefits align with her intrinsic values of leadership, achievement, and security.

11. **Honesty and Bias: Am I being honest with myself and aware of any biases in my decision?**

    - Finally, Sarah checks for biases that might be driving her decision, like a tendency to equate success with external validation. **She ensures that her motivations are genuinely hers** and not solely influenced by the external trappings of the job. She acknowledges her intrinsic motivations—status, leadership, and financial security—are valid but must be **balanced with what truly fulfills her.**

Where Does This Leave Sarah?

Sarah's decision isn't clear-cut, and that's the point. Using SI doesn't mean rejecting career success, financial gain, or the recognition that comes with high achievement. It's about integrating those desires into a framework that **also honors her deeper needs** for balance, ethical intentionality, and trivita.

If Sarah follows Egomeritism (EM), she might take the job, driven by the desire to maximize her status and financial standing. This could lead to increased stress and disconnection from her personal values, but it might also bring her satisfaction in achieving her goals. On the other hand, by applying SI, she can navigate her decision more holistically, ensuring that she's not just climbing the

ladder but doing so in a way that feels true to her entire self.

In my personal opinion, its also worth interrogating the motivations of her current and potential employers. How many companies focus on fairness, and ethics when making decisions? I struggle to think of systems that better exemplify Egomeritocratic structure than the modern corporation. Part of publishing this book is most certainly connected to my desire to no longer have to sacrifice my body and spirit in exchange for material needs. If I was Sarah, **I would be factoring in what value I represent to the people offering me this new position.**

What Would You Choose?

Sarah's journey highlights the complex relationship between career success and personal well-being. As you think about your own professional choices, consider how your motivations align with the principles of Sociointentionalism. Are your career goals driven by intrinsic fulfillment, or are you primarily seeking recognition and status? By integrating SI into your work life, you can strive for a balanced approach that honors both your ambitions and your personal happiness. What kind of professional path do you want to carve out for yourself?

Practical Tips: Work and Career

In our careers, it's easy to get caught up in the pursuit of titles, recognition, and financial gain. These external motivators can shape not only how we approach our work, but also **how we see ourselves.** However, focusing solely on extrinsic rewards can lead to burnout, dissatisfaction, or even a sense of disconnect from our own deeper values. Career fulfillment is about more than just climbing the ladder—it's about finding balance, growth, and meaning in the work we do.

Here are practical tips to help align your career path with the principles of Sociointentionalism (SI), ensuring that your professional life contributes to your personal well-being as much as your external success.

1. Set Boundaries

Establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life is

essential to protect your well-being. It can be tempting to work longer hours or take on extra tasks to prove your dedication, but without boundaries, burnout can quickly follow. **Determine what hours, tasks, and levels of engagement are sustainable for you,** and communicate those boundaries to your employer and colleagues.

For example, decide what time you will stop checking work emails each day or limit the number of late-night meetings you attend. Setting these boundaries not only protects your personal time but also improves your work-life balance. **(Obviously be smart within the limits of your position. If you get fired, don't show them my book.)**

2. Focus on Skill Development and Finding Meaning

Identify the aspects of your work that bring you fulfillment and focus on honing those skills. Even if your current job isn't your dream role, look for ways to make it more meaningful by improving your expertise in areas that interest you. This not only enhances job satisfaction but also prepares you for future opportunities that align with your values.

For instance, Sarah from our example could find ways to integrate her passion for leadership and mentorship into her current role, even if it means taking on new responsibilities or projects that allow her to grow in those areas.

3. Build Support Networks

Connect with colleagues and mentors who share your values and support your growth. Having a network of like-minded professionals helps create a positive work environment, where you can share experiences, challenges, and solutions. A strong support system can make your job feel more fulfilling and help you navigate difficult situations.

Start by **having casual conversations with coworkers,** attending professional events, or finding mentorship opportunities. Building these relationships creates a collaborative work culture that supports both individual and collective success.

4. Advocate for Yourself

Learning to communicate your needs and boundaries effectively is crucial in the workplace. Don't be afraid to speak up for what you need, whether it's asking for more flexible hours, clarifying expectations, or requesting professional development opportunities. Advocating for yourself ensures that your career aligns with your personal and professional goals.

For example, Sarah could approach her supervisor about taking on projects that align with her strengths, while also negotiating for a more balanced workload and possibly higher pay.

Remember, **you won't get what you don't ask for.** Companies are not there to watch out for your best interest. If you're being low-balled, don't accept. Clear communication will help you find a role that fits your values without compromising your well-being. (Expect pushback in this. **Companies don't like us advocating for ourselves.**)

5. Explore and Embrace Flexibility

Fulfillment in your career doesn't always come from a traditional path. Be open to exploring alternative roles or **blending your interests** to create a more meaningful work experience. Whether it's pursuing freelance work, combining multiple passions, or transitioning to a different industry, flexibility allows you to find work that truly resonates with you.

Consider opportunities that offer more control over your schedule or allow you to work in a way that aligns with your values. Sarah might explore consulting roles or side projects that allow her to use her skills in new, fulfilling ways without the pressure of a corporate structure. **You don't owe loyalty to any corporation or anyone for that matter.** If you are not happy, plan for and dedicate yourself to making a change. **You only get this one life.**

By integrating these tips into your career decisions, you can pursue success in a way that not only advances your professional goals but also honors your personal values and well-being. What kind of career would bring you both happiness and balance, and how can you make your next steps align with that vision?

Final Thoughts

Employment, **to me**, feels like a sadly necessary evil. The idea of spending the bulk of every day making money for someone else—while sacrificing my time, health, and energy—is maddening. I'm not saying you shouldn't love your job if it brings you fulfillment; I'm saying that **it's worth questioning the system that makes a career the centerpiece of our identity.**

Before corporations and payroll systems, labor existed, but it served survival, family, and community. People worked for the success of their immediate world, not to line the pockets of someone they'd never meet. Today, **most of us labor for profits we'll never see**, for the convenience of systems that exploit us, **not for the fulfillment or well-being of ourselves** or our communities.

If that feels like an issue for you too, consider this: **What could your life look like if you stepped out of this cycle, even a little?** Maybe it's not feasible to quit your job or radically change your lifestyle today, but what if you started directing even a fraction of your energy toward your own well-being instead of your employer's bottom line?

If that's an issue for you too, start exploring ways to step out of the cycle. In our society, it's tough to separate yourself from a career—what you do is often the first question someone asks when you meet them. But it's worth remembering that **people survived for generations because they had community, not convenience stores.** There's so much more to life than a job title or a paycheck.

I understand how hard it can be to live life on your own terms in a world designed to keep you tethered to the grind. But just because change is difficult doesn't mean it's not worth pursuing. We already pour our energy into work we don't love because it's what's expected of us. Imagine what could happen if you put even **a fraction of that effort into yourself instead.**

Chapter 7: Romantic and Platonic Relationships

My Story: Love, Labels, and Letting Go

This book is partly dedicated to my best friend and former partner, who was with me every step of the way during the creation of Sociointentionalism. They were my biggest supporter, my sounding board, and ultimately my inspiration. Recently, we decided to end our official relationship—a choice that came about because of what we learned together during this journey. It wasn't a failure; it was a redefinition.

I'm sharing this because I believe we're too quick to end relationships that could be reshaped. Plenty of people who make lousy partners could be wonderful friends. Similarly, many friendships could deepen into something more intimate if both parties communicate openly and set clear expectations. The labels we assign to relationships—romantic, platonic, monogamous, polyamorous—**are useful but not immutable.** What matters most is the balance, ethical intentionality, satisfaction, and trivita (B.E.S.T.) for everyone involved.

Adhering to the rigid rules of our relationship label almost cost us a connection that's profoundly important to both of us. If you have someone in your life who doesn't quite fit the label they currently occupy, consider exploring new ways to relate to them. It will likely involve growing pains and grieving the old dynamic, but the reward could be keeping someone you care about in your life in a way that feels better for both of you. **After all, we often forgive our friends for things that would end a romantic relationship.** We also communicate more directly with our friends, setting clearer boundaries and managing expectations better. Why not consider transitioning into friendship—or something entirely unique—if it means preserving a meaningful bond?

This process isn't easy. Trust me, I'm living it. But it's worth it if it means keeping someone you love in your life. In a world where meaningful connections are rare, you can never have too many friends.

Relationships are deeply personal but rarely exist without external influences. Society, family, friends, and even our own internalized beliefs can shape the way we navigate romantic partnerships. These influences can add layers of complexity, particularly for those whose identities defy traditional norms. This chapter explores the story of Riley and Morgan, a queer, non-binary couple, as they struggle with external expectations, internal insecurities, and the desire to take their relationship to the next level. Though their experiences are unique, the themes resonate with many couples facing societal and relational pressures.

Riley and Morgan's Story

Riley and Morgan are a non-binary couple who express their genders in different ways. Riley presents in a consistently masculine manner, leading their family to see them as **"the man"** in the relationship. Morgan, who enjoys fluid gender expression, sometimes dresses more femininely and sometimes more masculinely, which often upsets Riley's family. **Morgan's presentation doesn't fit neatly into the family's expectations of gender roles** within their relationship, creating tension when the couple interacts with Riley's family.

Outside of family dynamics, Riley's friends frequently express doubts about Morgan's commitment, warning Riley that Morgan, who has dated cisgender men in the past, **might eventually leave for a cis male partner.** These fears fuel Riley's insecurities and create friction in their relationship, making Riley question whether Morgan is truly committed.

Morgan faces their own struggles. While they desire to move in together, **financial instability** adds to their anxieties. They also grapple with needing to feel safe and protected in their relationship —a need that is often rooted in their past experiences with cis men. Morgan loves Riley but feels conflicted when expectations clash with their own needs and those imposed by society and friends.

Both Riley and Morgan want to move forward and take the next step by moving in together, but the pressures of traditional gender roles, family expectations, and external voices create hesitation. To find clarity, they decide to use the SI questions to better understand their motivations and see if moving in together is truly right for them at this time.

Using the SI Questions to Navigate Moving In Together

1. **Will this make me happy or just someone else?**

    - **Riley's Perspective:** Riley needs to consider whether moving in together will genuinely bring them happiness or if their desire to **move forward** is influenced by pressure to conform to a traditional progression of the relationship. Riley is aware that they sometimes feel responsible for Morgan's safety and comfort, but they need to ensure that their decision to move in **isn't about fulfilling a role expected by others, especially their family.**
    - **Morgan's Perspective:** Morgan reflects on whether their desire to move in is driven by their own happiness or a need to feel secure in their relationship. Are they pushing to move in together because they believe it will make them feel safer and more committed, or is it about proving something to their friends who doubt Riley's commitment? Morgan must ensure that the decision comes from a place of mutual joy rather than external validation.

4. **Is it my intention to produce the most good possible?**

    - **Riley's Perspective:** Riley's intention is to create a safe, loving environment for both of them, but they need to recognize that pushing forward without addressing their insecurities could harm the relationship. Riley's goal is to provide stability, but they must ask if their intention also considers Morgan's need for authentic self-expression and freedom from

restrictive roles.

- **Morgan's Perspective:** Morgan wants to **foster a supportive, shared space** with Riley, but they must ensure their intentions aren't clouded by external fears or a desire to escape financial pressures. Morgan's intention should be to build a home that respects both of their needs, **rather than simply seeking security or validation through cohabitation.**

7. **Is this fair to everyone involved, including myself, and have I considered others' perspectives?**

    - **Riley's Perspective:** Riley needs to reflect on whether expecting Morgan to conform to a certain role or presentation is fair. They must consider if their discomfort around family dynamics is influencing their expectations of Morgan and **whether it's fair to ask** Morgan to present in a way that doesn't feel authentic.
    - **Morgan's Perspective:** Morgan needs to evaluate if moving in together is fair to both of them, considering their financial struggles and emotional needs. Morgan must also reflect on whether it's **fair to place the burden of feeling protected solely on Riley,** and if their friends' opinions are skewing their perspective of Riley's commitment.

10. **Does this contribute to my growth—mentally, physically, or spiritually?**

    - **Riley's Perspective:** Riley's growth involves confronting their insecurities and challenging the family dynamics that push them into uncomfortable roles. Moving in together should be a step toward mutual growth, not a reinforcement of outdated gender expectations. Riley needs to assess whether this move will allow them to **feel comfortable in their identity and partnership.**
    - **Morgan's Perspective:** For Morgan, growth means redefining what safety and partnership look like outside of traditional gender norms. They need to consider if moving in together will help them grow into a more

confident, self-assured person, or if it's a temporary fix to deeper insecurities that need addressing.

13. **Have I thought through the long-term outcomes, and am I okay with them?**

    - **Riley's Perspective:** Riley must think about what moving in together would look like in the long term, including how they will handle external pressures, financial responsibilities, and ongoing family tensions. Are they prepared to support Morgan in a way that honors both of their needs, or are they rushing into a dynamic that may cause friction later?
    - **Morgan's Perspective:** Morgan needs to assess whether they can commit to the realities of moving in together, especially if financial strain or external doubts persist. They must consider **whether they are ready to face the long-term challenges** of building a home with Riley, including managing their own insecurities and setting boundaries with friends who doubt the relationship.

16. **Am I being honest with myself and aware of any biases in my decision?**

    - **Riley's Perspective:** Riley needs to confront their biases about what a protector or partner should be and whether they are projecting those biases onto Morgan. Are they asking Morgan to conform to an image that makes them feel secure around family, rather than fully embracing Morgan's authentic self?
    - **Morgan's Perspective:** Morgan must be **honest about their fears** and whether they are allowing outside voices to dictate their confidence in Riley. They need to assess whether they are looking for safety in external symbols, like moving in together, rather than finding security within the relationship itself.

Moving Forward

Riley and Morgan's relationship demonstrates how

Sociointentionalism (SI) empowers us to break free from societal scripts and focus on what truly matters: intentionality, reflection, and growth. By using the SI questions, they've begun to align their choices with their intrinsic motivations and shared values, rather than external pressures. This process helps them build a partnership that feels authentic and equitable, rather than constrained by expectations that don't fit their unique dynamic.

Moving forward, their focus isn't on conforming to traditional relationship milestones but on **creating a bond that works for them.** This means continuing to communicate openly, establishing boundaries that protect their individuality, and making choices that prioritize balance, ethical intentionality, satisfaction, and trivita (B.E.S.T.). Their journey underscores the importance of crafting relationships on their own terms, creating a safe, supportive, and loving partnership that honors both their identities.

Practical Tips: Romantic Relationships with SI

Romantic relationships often come with layers of societal and personal expectations, but the principles of SI offer tools to navigate these complexities with **grace and intentionality.** By focusing on intrinsic motivations and aligning your relationship with B.E.S.T. values, you can create a connection that is both fulfilling and sustainable. Here's how:

1. Build Trust Through Honesty

Trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship. Start by being honest with yourself about your feelings, needs, and intentions, and extend that honesty to your partner. When you express your thoughts with clarity and integrity, you create an environment where your partner feels safe to do the same.

Example: If you're feeling insecure or hurt, express your feelings without assigning blame. Frame the conversation as an opportunity to understand each other better, rather than a confrontation. If you aren't certain about how you feel, say so. Building trust is never a race. It will be long and uncomfortable but it is worth it.

2. Create Your Unique Communication Style

Relationships don't have to follow a "one-size-fits-all" communication model. Experiment with different ways of expressing your thoughts and feelings, and find what resonates for both of you. This might include verbal discussions, written notes, shared humor, or creative expressions like art or music.

Example: Share a meme or song lyric that reflects your mood as a conversation starter. These small, creative touches can open up deeper discussions while reducing pressure.

3. Take Responsibility for Your Needs

Practicing **self-awareness and accountability** strengthens relationships. Know your limits, prioritize self-care, and communicate your boundaries clearly. This builds reliability and ensures your partner knows what they can expect from you.

Example: If you're feeling overwhelmed and need time to recharge, let your partner know. Frame it as an **act of self-care,** so they understand it's not a rejection but a way to preserve your energy for the relationship.

4. Embrace Emotional Transparency and Good Faith

Assume your partner is approaching conversations with good intentions, and try to do the same. Be open about your emotions and listen actively to theirs, even when the conversation is challenging.

Example: If a conflict arises, use the SI question "Am I being honest with myself?" before responding. This reflection can help guide the conversation toward **understanding rather than defensiveness.**

5. Prioritize Self-Care to Support Each Other

A strong relationship starts with individuals who care for themselves. When you prioritize your own well-being—mentally, emotionally, and physically—**you are better equipped to**

contribute positively to the relationship. Encourage your partner to do the same.

Example: Set aside time each week for individual hobbies or self-care activities. Share what you've learned or enjoyed during this time to strengthen your connection through mutual growth.

6. Compromise with Intention

Compromise doesn't mean losing yourself; it's about finding solutions that honor the values and needs of **both partners.** Approach compromises with an open mind and a commitment to fairness.

Example: If you and your partner disagree on how to spend a weekend, consider alternating activities or finding a third option that appeals to both of you. Regardless of the disagreement, make it clear that your goal is continuity, not separation. EM makes every argument feel like the end. Make sure they know you're working to find compromise.

7. Reassess Expectations

Romanticized portrayals of relationships in media can set unrealistic standards. Instead of striving for perfection, focus on whether your needs are being met and if your partner's role in your life aligns with both of your values. Not all needs can or should be fulfilled by one person, and that's okay.

Example: Ask yourself if your expectations are rooted in societal norms or genuine desires. If a need isn't being met, consider whether it's fair to expect this from your partner or if it's something you can address in another way.

On Continued Compromise

I believe Egomeritism (EM) pushes us to abandon people when they no longer serve our pursuit of measurable success. **This creates isolation and stifles the growth of communities.** When everyone is in competition with everyone else, the idea of being altruistic rarely surfaces. And even when we try, it's easy to get discouraged

—whether by betrayal, indifference, or simply not getting the warm, cinematic response we imagine. But here's the thing: It doesn't matter *why* we feel something. If we feel it, we should address it.

We want to feel good about treating people nicely, but we also want rewards for doing so. This is where we stumble. True connection, real community, and meaningful growth don't come from instant gratification. They come from **sticking by each other, even when it's messy, and letting the issues work themselves out.**

Since my ER visit, I've been in therapy, where I spend three days a week with the same group of people. Getting to know them has been... an adjustment. For the first five weeks, I was constantly butting heads with one person in particular. I could tell they weren't trying to be difficult—it just wasn't clicking between us. But with deliberate effort from the instructor to help us find common ground, something shifted. I'd even say that, in time, this person could become a friend.

The point is, we often expect things to happen quickly. EM tells us to keep moving forward, always chasing the next thing. So, when someone doesn't text back in the tone we want, or when the first interaction isn't perfect, **we feel compelled to block them and move on.** We wonder why love and connection seem so hard to find when, in reality, **we only start thinking about others when we feel lonely enough.**

SI's *Continued Compromise* method is a reminder that one bad interaction between two people who are dedicated to growth can lead to a better one with time and effort. Don't you want to stick around long enough to see that change?

Disclaimer

This doesn't mean you should stay with people who aren't trying. You have every right to choose who you spend time with—and even if someone *is* trying, but you simply don't want them in your life, that's valid too. We get to decide who sticks around and how close they are allowed to be.

The point of *Continued Compromise* is to reflect on why you were

drawn to someone in the first place. If there was a strong connection or an undeniable reason to talk to them, consider that they likely felt the same way about you. **Give communication a chance. Give compromise a chance.** Stick around long enough to see if real, tangible change is possible.

This doesn't mean people need to mask or stop being themselves to adjust their behavior. **Growth doesn't have to mean losing authenticity—it's about choosing to be intentional.** As with everything else in SI, I ask: *What else are you planning to do?*

We have each other. That's it. No third-party sentient species to contend with (yet). So, be willing to grow, be patient with the growth of others, or simply choose to be alone. Either option is valid. What matters most is being honest with yourself about the choices you make—**because we are *always* choosing something.**

Tokens of Connection: Building Together with a Shared Fulfillment Board

One way to foster deeper connection and mutual growth in a relationship is by creating a **shared fulfillment board**. This can be a physical or digital space where you and your partner track accomplishments, milestones, and acts of connection that strengthen your bond. T**he idea isn't about tallying points or keeping score;** it's about celebrating the journey you're on together and reminding each other of your shared intentions.

My partner and I recently started a shared fulfillment board as part of our re-commitment to being in each other's lives, **no matter how that relationship evolves.** We use it to add tokens whenever we feel we've accomplished something that brings us closer. These could be moments of vulnerability, thoughtful gestures, or collaborative achievements—anything that strengthens the foundation of our connection.

How to Use a Shared Fulfillment Board

- **Celebrate the Small and Big Wins:** Tokens can represent anything from a meaningful conversation that deepened your understanding of each other to a shared project you

completed together. It's not about the size of the accomplishment but the impact it had on your bond.
- **Focus on Positivity:** Use the board to highlight moments of growth and joy, not grievances or unmet expectations. This reinforces the good in your relationship and helps shift focus away from negativity.
- **Encourage Creativity:** Tokens can take any form—sticky notes, drawings, written affirmations, or small mementos like photos or tickets from shared experiences. Let the board reflect your personalities and relationship.

Shared Fulfillment Board Etiquette

To make your shared board effective and meaningful, it's important to set some ground rules:

1. **Respect Each Other's Contributions:** Every token added should come from a place of sincerity. Avoid criticizing or questioning the tokens your partner chooses to add; **if it's meaningful to them, it belongs there.**
2. **Balance Participation:** Ensure that both partners feel comfortable contributing. **If one person dominates the board while the other feels excluded, the exercise can lose its purpose.** A solution to this is to never add a token without the other present. This way, every token is agreed upon and acknowledged as it goes up by both partners. This way, you **put the tokens up together,** rather than any one person dominating the board.
3. **Set Time for Reflection:** Periodically revisit the board together to reflect on your shared journey. This can be a beautiful way to celebrate your relationship's growth and identify areas where you want to focus more energy.
4. **Avoid Competition:** The board isn't about proving who contributes more. It's a collaborative effort that represents the shared value of your connection.
5. **Stay Flexible:** Life changes, and so do relationships. Let your board evolve to reflect new goals, shared interests, or even shifts in your dynamic.

Examples of Shared Tokens

- “Had a tough but honest conversation about future goals.”
- “Planned and enjoyed a special date night together.”
- “Survived a stressful week by supporting each other.”
- “Tried a new activity neither of us had done before.”
- “Spent time listening without distraction.”

Why It Matters

A shared fulfillment board isn’t just a decorative tool—it’s a **reminder of your commitment to building something intentional together.** It’s an invitation to focus on the positive, foster gratitude, and continually renew your investment in the relationship. By intentionally adding tokens of connection, you’re creating a tangible record of your journey that you can look back on and celebrate.

Imagine this: You glance at your board after a challenging day and see a note your partner added—something simple like, *“Held hands through the tough stuff today.”* It might just be what you need to remember that no matter the challenges, you’re in this together.

By incorporating a shared fulfillment board into your relationship, you create a space to acknowledge your efforts and honor your growth. What token will you add today to celebrate the bond you’re building?

Final Thoughts

Lately, I’ve been reflecting on how we tend to approach relationships. Too often, it feels like **two people living separate lives with different goals,** working around one another rather than genuinely partnering on the same journey. But your partner isn’t supposed to be competition or a roadblock—they’re someone to build with, someone to share your path. Yet, respect often feels absent in the way we conduct relationships, and I think it stems from our culture of **transaction and external expectation.**

We see it everywhere: the performance of a first date, the effort to impress and secure a connection. But then we get tired of acting, start showing more of our real selves, and when conflict inevitably arises, many of us choose to leave rather than adapt. We dust

ourselves off, put on a new costume, **and start again,** hoping the next relationship won't require the same work.

Not every relationship is like this, but I can't go a day without seeing someone online ask, *"What do you bring to the table?"* That question reeks of transactional thinking, as if a relationship is a negotiation of goods rather than **a shared, human experience.** What you bring to the table is yourself, and that's **plenty.** If someone doesn't see your value, they're simply not meant to be in your community.

Relationships thrive not because they adhere to societal expectations or fit into a prescribed mold, but because they reflect the **authentic connection, mutual respect, and intentional efforts** of the people involved. Whether you're starting fresh, rebuilding, or strengthening a long-standing bond, remember that the true measure of success isn't in perfection or performance. It's in showing up as yourself, respecting your partner's individuality, and working together toward shared growth.

How can you take one step today to nurture a relationship that fulfills you—whether it's romantic, platonic, or something entirely unique?

On Labels and Self-Definition

I think it's hilarious how so many people struggle to understand why anyone would want to depart from the gender binary. It's fascinating to see how **coercive systems defend themselves**—how they enforce conformity while expecting everyone to stay in line. For those who comfortably fit within the binary, or believe they do, it might seem like people stepping outside of it are just being deliberately defiant. But it's not that simple.

I was forced out of the binary by people who insisted that my inherent behaviors didn't fit. The idea that there's a qualification to being a man or a woman—that if I don't follow specific rules, I cease to be one—makes no sense. **Yet, at the same time, I'm somehow not allowed to reject the binary altogether?** The expectation seems to be that people must spend their entire lives desperately trying to measure up to some vague, shifting standard

set by strangers.

That logic is baffling. And honestly, it applies to any label whose **purpose is to avoid truly understanding a person.** Labels should be informational, assigned by the individual, to communicate who they are and what they want people to know about them. But the way we use labels now is far from that. They've become markers of conformity, tools to tell people to stop being themselves and instead fit into a specific set of criteria.

If you don't measure up, you're supposed to try harder. If you don't fit the label, you're meant to feel shame. **But if the label can't be removed or redefined by the person it's applied to, then what's the point of it?**

Chapter 8: Social Hierarchy and Authority

My Story: Loyalty, Loss, and Political Hardball

I lost a long-time friend over the 2024 election. Fo and I had been friends since college. He was an instructor in a different department, a bit older than me, but we clicked quickly after collaborating on a project through a mutual associate. In 2016, we were both all-in on the Democratic Party, spending hours online owning Republicans with the same predictable lines. We truly believed that fighting on behalf of Hillary Clinton was the best use of our political engagement.

By 2024, I was burned out on that mindset. **The blind loyalty to party lines no longer resonated with me,** especially as I began questioning the Democratic Party's complicity in the events in Gaza. That shift didn't sit well with Fo. He started sending passive-aggressive messages in response to my social media posts as early as December 2023. His tone grew increasingly hostile, and while I tried to respond calmly and explain my point of view, it only seemed to escalate things.

The breaking point came when Fo posted a list of Joe Biden's accomplishments, which I commented on, asking whether Gaza disqualified him from being honored for those achievements. His response was a venomous wall of text. To Fo, I had become a disruptor, someone "ruining our great nation" by not aligning 100% with the Democratic Party. He accused me of enabling fascism for daring to question loyalty to the party.

Frustrated, I messaged him privately. I told him I had taken his earlier tone as excitement, not aggression, and asked if I'd misread the situation. His reply was curt and dismissive: "Politics is hardball."

I muted Fo for a while but kept an eye on his posts. Over the next several months, his rhetoric only intensified, and **his disdain for anyone not fully aligned with his views became more apparent.** Eventually, I unfriended him—not out of anger, but because I couldn't continue engaging with someone who dismissed me so disrespectfully after years of friendship. I had valued his opinions and leadership, but his **rigidity left no room for conversation or nuance.**

This isn't a story about tolerating every opinion or maintaining friendships at all costs. I'm sharing this because it highlights the dangerous "us vs. them" mentality that dominates political discourse today. In a world desperate to combat concepts like fascism, we've adopted the very war-like rhetoric and divisive tactics we claim to oppose.

It made me wonder: Is **winning** an election the ultimate goal, or is **solving the problems** that drive people to the polls what truly matters? If "saving democracy" is so important, why are we intimidating people on Facebook to vote how we tell them to? For Fo, party loyalty seemed to be the only metric of success, despite the reality that his own life was full of unresolved issues that political figures could address—if only they kept their promises and held ethical company.

We can't fix the world if we refuse to have conversations, even with those we don't agree with. **Loyalty without reflection doesn't solve problems; it perpetuates them.** If we truly want progress, we need to embrace accountability, nuance, and respect—even when it's hard.

I strongly believe that Fo's treatment of me came in part from our positions in the social hierarchy. He was an instructor when we met and thus I was subordinate. When I was mirroring his ideas, he was fine, but me stepping out of line was a major offense. This is why I think he felt calling me out despite our friendship was perfectly ok.

Remember that everyone's most important issue is going to be different, and no one will ever put their needs aside for yours fully, **nor should you want them to.** We're going to pick different sides for different reasons, but there is never a reason to attack each other for it. **Disagreement is necessary for growth.** Disagreeing

with people higher on the social ladder than you, should never be considered disrespect.

The Conflict of Faith and Authority

Why did most of our parents rarely ever apologize? Because to apologize means admitting they were wrong, and in many family structures, being "right" is synonymous with being in control. Why shouldn't you question authority? Because authority is assumed to be infallible, as if leadership guarantees wisdom. Why do we have age requirements for government positions? Because **society assumes that age equates to experience and competence,** despite many young people demonstrating fresh perspectives and innovative problem-solving skills. Why do job promotions so often favor seniority over merit? Because **longevity is frequently mistaken for capability.**

Respect for authority and hierarchy is often seen as a cornerstone of social order. We're taught to follow rules, honor those in power, and maintain stability by respecting established structures. But these structures often rely on outdated, illogical assumptions. For example, why do we defer to the "customer is always right" mentality when it enables disrespectful behavior toward workers? Why do many workplaces equate strict adherence to dress codes with productivity, **as if professionalism is defined by a tie rather than competence?** These rules reflect a culture where challenging the status quo is seen as rebellion rather than reasoned critique.

What happens when authority conflicts with personal beliefs? Navigating power dynamics becomes challenging, especially in communities where questioning leadership is discouraged. This chapter delves into the complexities of respecting authority while maintaining personal integrity. Through the story of Daniel, we'll explore the challenges of questioning authority in a hierarchy-focused society and examine how Sociointentionalism (SI) can guide individuals when faced with difficult choices.

Daniel's Story

Daniel is a 20-year-old who has grown up deeply involved in his religious community. His church is the center of his life; it's where

he finds comfort, purpose, and a sense of belonging. The church's leader, Pastor John, is a respected figure who holds considerable influence over the congregation. Daniel looks up to Pastor John and has always followed his teachings **without question.** However, recently, Daniel has started to feel conflicted.

Pastor John has implemented a new rule requiring all young adults in the congregation to participate in a **mandatory community outreach program.** While on the surface, this rule seems beneficial, Daniel discovers that the program involves pushing controversial beliefs onto vulnerable people, often without their consent. Daniel believes in helping others, but he feels uncomfortable with the tactics being used. He's torn between his **respect for Pastor John's authority and his own moral compass.**

What Motivates Daniel?

Before exploring how Daniel can use SI to navigate this dilemma, it's important to understand the different motivations influencing his decision:

- **Respect for Authority and Tradition**: Daniel has been raised to honor the church's hierarchy and believes that respecting authority is essential to maintaining community harmony. He doesn't want to appear **rebellious or disrespectful.**
- **Desire for Community Acceptance**: Daniel values his place in the church and fears that **questioning Pastor John could lead to social ostracism.** His community is his support system, and he worries about losing his sense of belonging.
- **Commitment to Ethical Values**: Daniel's discomfort with the outreach program isn't just a personal opinion—it's rooted in his deep sense of right and wrong. He feels that the approach being taken is **manipulative** and goes against his own values of fairness and respect.
- **Fear of Conflict and Repercussions**: Daniel worries that speaking out could lead to conflict with Pastor John, whom he admires. He **fears being seen as a troublemaker** and the potential loss of relationship with someone he looks up to.

These motivations reflect a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, highlighting Daniel's struggle between following authority and

staying true to his values. Let's explore how he might use SI principles to navigate this challenging situation.

Applying SI Principles to Daniel's Decision

Daniel decides to pause and reflect using the six SI questions, which help him align his actions with his intrinsic motivations while considering the broader impact of his choice:

1. **Intrinsic Motivation: Will this make me happy or just someone else?**

    - Daniel asks himself whether participating in the outreach program will bring him personal satisfaction or if he's doing it solely to please Pastor John and maintain his standing in the community. He realizes that **his discomfort suggests this action isn't aligned with his personal values.**

3. **Positive Intentions: Is it my intention to produce the most good possible?**

    - He reflects on his intentions behind participating. **Daniel's goal is to help people genuinely,** not to push beliefs onto them in ways that feel unethical. His desire to do good is at odds with the approach being mandated by Pastor John.

5. **Fairness and Perspective: Is this fair to everyone involved, including myself, and have I considered others' perspectives?**

    - Daniel considers the impact of the program on those being targeted and the ethical implications of the church's methods. He also reflects on whether it's fair to himself to participate in **something that makes him uncomfortable just to avoid conflict.**

7. **Personal Growth: Does this contribute to my growth—mentally, physically, or spiritually?**

- Daniel evaluates whether going along with the program helps him grow spiritually or if it contradicts his personal beliefs. He recognizes that blindly following authority in this instance could **stifle his moral and spiritual development.**

9. **Long-Term Outcomes: Have I thought through the long-term outcomes, and am I okay with them?**

    - He imagines the potential outcomes of both speaking up and staying silent. If he speaks out, he might face backlash, but he would maintain his integrity. If he stays silent, he risks compromising his values and contributing to practices he doesn't believe in.

11. **Honesty and Bias: Am I being honest with myself and aware of any biases in my decision?**

    - Finally, Daniel checks for biases, acknowledging his fear of losing his place in the community. He asks himself if his reluctance to speak out is genuinely about respect for authority or if it's driven by fear of conflict and change.

Rethinking the Nature of Hierarchy: Is It Ethical?

Daniel's struggle highlights a broader question: **is hierarchy itself an ethical structure,** or does it inherently create power imbalances that lead to conflict, fear, and inequality? In many societies, respecting authority and maintaining social order are seen as necessary for stability. However, these structures often place power in the hands of a few, making it difficult for those lower in the hierarchy to voice concerns or challenge unjust decisions.

Sociointentionalism (SI) encourages us to question whether hierarchy is truly beneficial or if it perpetuates a cycle of dominance and submission that undermines the very fabric of an equitable society. Rather than viewing individuals as parts of a rigid structure, SI promotes seeing everyone as **equal contributors to a cohesive whole.** When power is shared, and decisions are made with Ethical Intentionality, the focus shifts from maintaining

control to **fostering collaboration and mutual respect.**

Imagine a community where decisions are guided not by rank but by collective wisdom and shared values. This approach doesn't eliminate the need for leadership but **redefines it as a role of guidance and support rather than authority and command.** By challenging the hierarchical mindset, we can begin to create environments where individuals like Daniel feel empowered to speak up without fear of repercussion, knowing their voice is valued as part of the greater good.

Where Does This Leave Daniel?

Daniel's situation is complex, reflecting the real-world challenges of navigating authority and hierarchy. By using SI principles, Daniel can weigh his respect for Pastor John against his personal ethics, finding a path that honors both his community values and his own integrity.

Unfortunately, this is a **common problem with no personal solution** because this is just how society is right now. Many people, like Daniel, are forced to navigate power structures that often silence dissent and discourage questioning. This dynamic can leave individuals feeling powerless, even when they are acting with the best intentions.

What Would You Choose?

How do you feel about the nature of hierarchy? Do you believe it's necessary for maintaining order, or do you think there's a better way? Sociointentionalism challenges us to rethink these structures, advocating for a society that values Ethical Intentionality and sees every person as an equal. Would you prefer a system where power is shared, and everyone's voice matters? The choice is yours—what kind of world do you want to be part of?

Practical Tips: Social Hierarchy and Authority

Navigating the complexities of authority and hierarchy can be challenging, especially in a society that often encourages blind obedience to those in power. To foster healthy relationships and communities, it's **important to challenge traditional notions of**

authority while maintaining respect for the experiences and perspectives of others. Here are some practical tips to help you engage with authority in a way that promotes both personal integrity and communal well-being.

1. Recognize Unconscious Bias

Understanding that we all harbor biases is essential for fair and open interactions. Often, we may **unconsciously judge ideas based on who presents them rather than the merit of the ideas** themselves. By becoming aware of these biases, you can create a more equitable dialogue where everyone's voice is valued.

For example, when discussing different viewpoints in a group setting, take a moment to reflect on whether your response is influenced by your perception of the speaker rather than the content of their message.

2. View Yourself as an Authority on Your Experience

You are the foremost expert on your own life and experiences. While it's important to listen to others, remember that **your perspective holds significant value.** Don't claim to know everything or boast about your knowledge; instead, acknowledge that your insights are valid and worthy of consideration.

For instance, when discussing personal boundaries or feelings, assertively share your experiences as they are the most relevant to your situation. This approach encourages others to respect your narrative while inviting them to share theirs.

3. Refrain from Abusing Status to Get What You Want

If you hold a position of authority—whether as a boss, teacher, or community leader—use that power responsibly. Avoid leveraging your status to manipulate situations or people for personal gain. Instead, **model ethical behavior and foster an environment of mutual respect.**

By treating everyone with dignity and fairness, you reinforce a culture of equality, making it easier for others to feel empowered to speak up and share their insights.

4. Use Hierarchies to Dissolve Hierarchies

Recognize that hierarchies exist, but they don't have to dictate interactions. If you find yourself in a position of authority, **use your influence to create a more egalitarian atmosphere.** Encourage open communication and actively invite contributions from all members of your community.

By setting a tone of collaboration and respect, you can help dismantle oppressive structures and foster an environment where everyone feels valued.

5. Don't Compare Yourself to Others

Comparison can breed resentment and insecurity. Focus on your unique journey and resist the urge to measure your worth against that of others. **Everyone has their own challenges and triumphs,** and recognizing this can help you foster healthier relationships with yourself and those around you.

When engaging with peers or colleagues, remind yourself that everyone is on their own path. Celebrate your accomplishments without undermining others, and encourage an atmosphere where **mutual support is prioritized over competition.**

By implementing these tips, you can navigate the complexities of authority and hierarchy in a way that honors both your values and those of your community. How can you take these principles into your own life to create more equitable relationships?

On Naming Your Besties and Making Up Words

While building Sociointentionalism, it occurred to me that language is often the most important factor in internalizing the things we care about. There's a reason why hymns in church are repeated over and over until they become second nature—**so that they pop into your head throughout your life and maintain your connection to the God you believe in.** That's a deeply human thing, and I think it's great if it brings positivity. But if the words you repeat only remind you that you're worthless and will never be good enough, maybe you shouldn't keep reinforcing those ideas.

We speak things into existence, and that includes the words we use to define ourselves. Many of the words we say daily cause us pain, and in lieu of alternatives, we should be willing to create our own reality. Because at the end of the day, *all* words are made up. That's why I encourage making up words like *Trivita*.

I also believe we should **extend that same approach to naming.** We're all given names at birth, but what if we lived in a society where people commonly chose their own names when they felt ready? What if it was normal to have gender-neutral pet names assigned by different people in our circles—names given by parents, close friends, and partners that reflect our unique relationships and identities?

I've always had mixed feelings about my given name. It doesn't entirely align with who I am, and that feels strange. But beyond that, I dislike when people decide to shorten or alter it based on my age, appearance, or their perception of our closeness. **It's a name I had no say in, so it feels invasive when others take liberties with it.**

Now, however, I have several different nicknames, each given by people I interact with regularly. Many of these names are included in the dedications page of this book—friends I've known for years and some I've only recently met, but all of them are family to me. And I've given them names in return. Some of these nicknames are tied to specific friend groups, while others are deeply personal. What matters most is that I am known by the impact I've made, not by the label I was assigned at birth.

Like with anything, **language shapes reality.** I want us to be more willing to change how we speak—whenever and however we want to. **I encourage code-switching, playing with accents, and embracing different ways of communicating.** I don't believe tone is an accurate measure of intent or character, despite having been upset myself by how certain people speak in certain contexts. But the reality is that **everything we do in this world is a performance**—deliberate, constant, and often unsatisfying. So why not invent one for yourself? Why not embrace the idea that it's all "fake" and lean into that freedom? Or better yet, if "fake" isn't the right word, why not create a new one?

A personal example of this is how I call everyone *besties*. If you're reading this book, *you* are a bestie. I've been using the word to refer to all people as a way of neutralizing hierarchy. According to SI, *we are all besties.* And that raises an important question: ***How should you treat your besties?***

We tend to categorize people—friends, acquaintances, strangers—assigning them levels of importance in our minds. But what happens when you call everyone a bestie instead? Try it. **See how your social life changes when you remove the instinct to rank people in your mind.** Some besties will be closer than others, sure. Some will be in your life forever, some for a season. But if we approach people as besties first, we foster warmth and connection instead of treating every interaction like a test of worthiness.

If everyone became used to the idea of people choosing their own names and identities, we'd have to stop relying on outdated gender roles. If your friends' names are *Fluffy, Toothpick,* and *Ficus*—and even those names shift depending on who they're speaking to—**how could anyone reasonably insist that we all must fit into only two categories?** The same logic applies to language itself. If we can invent words and assign them meaning, then our world becomes shaped by *all* of us, rather than by a handful of successful people dictating how we speak and think.

This is part of why TikTok became so successful. It allowed (to a greater degree than certain other platforms?) language, identity, and culture to be created in real time by the people experiencing it, rather than purely by institutions trying to control it. And if we can do that on a social platform, what's stopping us from doing it everywhere?

Chapter 9: Equality and Fairness

My Story: Struggling, Surviving, and Seeking Dignity

Last month, I was hospitalized for suicidal ideation. Don't worry—I'm getting the help I need. I've started therapy and joined an outpatient program to work on finding my sense of self-worth. It's ironic, really: **I genuinely believe every one of you is inherently valuable, yet I've always struggled to apply that same belief to myself.** I'm fortunate to live in a state where the government healthcare system is relatively decent, though navigating its endless red tape has been a massive challenge.

Take forms, for instance. For some reason, filling them out has always been a source of debilitating stress for me. Combine that with my current mental state, and it's a recipe for chaos. My state requires a three-hour interview—during a weekday, in the middle of the workday—to determine whether I qualify for assistance. This meant I had to take time off work just to prove that I was, in fact, employed.

Even after qualifying, I'm required to report my income every month, despite the fact that my temp agency already reports it directly to the state. This redundancy should save me the trouble of manually submitting forms, but instead, I'm stuck navigating a system that seems designed to test my patience. So, on top of trying to rebuild my life, fill prescriptions, attend appointments, work a job, and write this book, I've also had to spend countless hours proving to my state that I'm unfortunate enough to deserve their help.

This experience has forced me to confront the deeper issue at play. In a society dominated by **Egomeritism (EM), we're taught that comfort and resources must be earned through hard work.** We equate financial success with effort, assuming that those who have money deserve it and that those who struggle simply aren't trying

hard enough. This ideology isn't just misguided—it's harmful. It creates barriers for those who need help the most, reinforcing systemic inequalities and denying basic dignity to anyone who can't meet arbitrary standards.

But what happens when hard work alone isn't enough? **How do we justify denying someone's basic needs simply because they can't afford them?** In this chapter, we'll explore the challenges of achieving equality in a society obsessed with earned rewards. Through the story of Alex, we'll examine how societal beliefs about money, hard work, and deservingness impact access to essential services like healthcare and how Sociointentionalism (SI) offers a more compassionate, equitable alternative.

Alex's Story: The Struggle for Healthcare and Accessibility

Alex is a 26-year-old living with a chronic health condition that requires ongoing treatment. He also has a disability that makes daily life a constant challenge. Despite working part-time, his job barely covers his basic needs, let alone the medical expenses that keep piling up. Alex frequently encounters barriers—both physical and societal—that hinder his ability to thrive. He is often told to "work harder" to overcome his struggles, **as if sheer effort could magically solve systemic issues.**

Recently, Alex was denied financial assistance for a necessary medical procedure. The insurance company deemed the treatment "non-essential," leaving Alex to navigate a system that **constantly questions his worthiness for help.** He feels trapped in a cycle where he must **prove his disability's severity** to access the basic care he needs. Meanwhile, wealthier individuals with better insurance receive care without question, reflecting a societal belief that having **money equates to deserving better treatment.**

The Flaws of an EM-Driven Society

Alex's story highlights the deep-rooted issues of an Egomeritism-driven society that equates financial success with deservingness. In this system, access to essential services like **healthcare is not a right but a privilege earned through financial means.** Society

often sees those who struggle as less deserving of help, reinforcing harmful stereotypes that suggest poverty or disability are the results of personal failure.

1. **The Myth of Hard Work Equals Deservingness**: In an EM society, there's a pervasive belief that those who work hard will naturally succeed, and those who struggle simply aren't trying hard enough. This narrative dismisses the systemic barriers that many people face, such as lack of access to quality education, healthcare, or job opportunities, and ignores the reality that **not everyone starts from the same place.**
2. **Financial Means as a Measure of Worth**: People like Alex are frequently judged based on their ability to pay for services. In healthcare, this means that life-saving treatments and basic accommodations are often out of reach for those without adequate insurance or financial resources. **The idea that money equals effort and deservingness creates a hierarchy of worth,** where wealthier individuals receive better care simply because they can afford it.
3. **Stigma of Needing Help**: Society often stigmatizes those who require assistance, **portraying them as burdens** rather than recognizing the systemic failures that create their circumstances. People with disabilities, in particular, are constantly pressured to prove their worthiness, facing **a gauntlet of bureaucracy and judgment just to access basic support.**
4. **Overlooked Everyday Disabilities**: We often don't consider how common disabilities are; even **needing glasses is technically a disability.** However, because glasses are widely accepted and easily accessible for many, we don't view this as a significant barrier. Yet, even something as simple as glasses can be a luxury for those who can't afford them, illustrating how society's approach to disability is inconsistent and deeply flawed.

How SI Principles Could Create a More Equitable Society

Sociointentionalism (SI) proposes a different approach, one that

emphasizes Balanced Living, Ethical Intentionality, Self Satisfaction, and Trivita (B.E.S.T.). In an SI-driven society, the focus shifts from earned rewards to a **holistic view of human value,** recognizing that everyone deserves access to support and care, regardless of their financial situation or perceived productivity.

1. **Balanced Living**: SI promotes a balanced approach to life that considers both personal well-being and community support. In an SI society, **healthcare and accessibility would be viewed as fundamental rights, not privileges.** People like Alex would receive the care they need without the constant burden of proving their deservingness.
2. **Ethical Intentionality**: At the heart of SI is the commitment to act with positive intentions, fairness, and ethical considerations. This means creating systems that prioritize **helping people based on need, not on financial status.** In an SI society, ethical intentionality would guide policies that ensure everyone has access to essential services, fostering a more just and compassionate world.
3. **Self Satisfaction**: SI emphasizes that personal fulfillment comes not just from individual success but from **contributing to a society that values all its members.** People like Alex would be supported **not only because it's fair** but because a society that cares for its most vulnerable is inherently stronger and more cohesive.
4. **Trivita**: SI's focus on overall health and well-being means recognizing that everyone, at some point, will face **challenges that require support**—whether it's a temporary setback, a disability, or aging. In an SI society, the goal would be to ensure that trivita is accessible to all, creating a safety net that doesn't discriminate based on wealth or status.

Where Does This Leave Alex?

Unfortunately, Alex's situation is all too common, and there is no personal solution to a problem that is rooted in societal structures. This is the reality of living in a world that equates money with worthiness and hard work with deservingness. Many people, like Alex, are forced to navigate a system that constantly **questions their right to basic care and support.** They are left with few

choices, often relying on advocacy, community support, or sheer resilience to get by.

The truth is, everyone will face some form of disability or challenge in their lifetime. Even something as simple as needing glasses is a form of disability, yet society has normalized this accommodation because it is so widespread. Still, many people cannot afford even basic necessities like glasses, highlighting the **arbitrary nature of our current system's approach to support.**

What Would You Choose?

How do you feel about our current system? Do you believe that access to basic needs should be tied to financial success, or would you prefer a society that values Ethical Intentionality and fairness? Sociointentionalism challenges us to rethink how we measure deservingness, advocating for a world where support is given based on need, not on wealth. As you reflect on Alex's story, consider what kind of society you want to live in and how we can work towards creating a fairer, more compassionate world.

Practical Tips: Equality and Fairness

The idea of deservingness is deeply ingrained in our society, particularly in systems shaped by Egomeritism (EM). We're taught to believe that success and access to resources are earned through hard work, and **those who struggle simply haven't done enough.** But the truth is, life is more complicated than that. Financial struggles, disabilities, and systemic barriers make it impossible for many people to "earn" the things they need to survive and thrive. In these moments, community becomes essential. It's not about waiting for someone to prove their worth—it's about offering help, support, and understanding, knowing that **everyone has inherent value.** Here are some practical ways to apply these principles in your life:

1. **Seek support and be willing to give support.** Only through community can we truly accommodate all needs. Find out if someone in your community could use extra help, and **if you have the ability and drive**, offer your assistance. If they don't need one thing, don't give up there. Find some way to

be helpful. The effort will be seen and appreciated. Building a network of mutual support is crucial, especially in a world where systemic inequalities exist.

2. **Involve yourself in the struggle to change things however you feel drawn and able.** Engage with organizations that advocate for accessibility and fairness. These groups often have resources or can connect you with people who can improve your quality of life. Hiding away your problems to appear “normal” only reinforces harmful societal expectations. Opening up to others and seeking help is not a weakness but an important step toward fostering a more inclusive community.
3. **Reflect on how many problems in your life are solved by or could be solved by money.** Acknowledge that many people face the same issues but lack the financial means to resolve them. **Dismantle the notion that some people deserve more simply because they can afford it.** Equality means addressing the root of the issue, not just rewarding those who can already afford the solution.
4. **Don’t beat yourself up, blame yourself, or feel like a burden.** The world may tell you that your worth is tied to your productivity or financial success, but that’s not true. You’re doing something many couldn’t handle by pushing forward in life. Keep going—you’re worthy of all the good things in life, regardless of what society might suggest. Compassion for yourself is just as important as compassion for others, because having self-compassion will generally make your day to day life more enjoyable and fruitful.

These tips remind us that fairness isn’t about proving worth but about recognizing the intrinsic value in every person, and that real support comes from building compassionate, equitable communities.

Chapter 10: Personal Well-being

My Story: Breaking the Script, Finding the Path

This wasn't my first hospitalization for something like this. The first time happened a few years ago, right after my relationship with my ex ended abruptly. To really understand, you've got to know something about me: **I'm someone who needs a plan.** I struggle to just "go with the flow," even in things I enjoy. I thrive on structure, and when life loses that structure, I start to lose my grip.

For as long as I can remember, I thought I knew my path. Get good grades, graduate high school, go to college, land a high-paying job, get married, have kids, raise those kids well...then die. That was the plan. It wasn't because I particularly loved any part of that journey, but because I just wanted to be finished. I treated life like a game where the only goal was to reach the end as efficiently as possible. **When you're so focused on the end, is it any surprise that I never learned to love the process—or myself?**

In that relationship, I didn't just love my partner. I built my entire identity around them. My life became about pleasing them, keeping them, and shaping myself into what I thought they wanted. So, when the relationship ended—the one I was so sure was my "forever"—I felt like I had failed at life's game. And since I thought I'd failed, I figured it was time to turn off the console.

To be honest, I had decided long before that if this relationship didn't work out, I wasn't going to keep going. So, when that final fight happened, I followed through with what I thought was the inevitable conclusion.

I'm glad I failed. Not because life suddenly became this joyful, magical experience—I still have plenty of struggles—but because I've learned there are other paths. So many other paths. And I

realized that while I was busy trying to be who I thought this person wanted me to be, I wasn't being myself. I wasn't doing the things I loved. **I wasn't even writing anymore** because I knew they didn't care for it. I'd spent so many years fulfilling a perceived obligation to "the way things are" that I forgot to live for me.

Our society teaches us to equate success with external milestones: getting good grades, landing prestigious jobs, and presenting an image of perfection. But what happens when chasing these benchmarks comes at the cost of our mental and physical health? When the pressure to perform leaves us burned out and disconnected from ourselves?

This chapter delves into the impact of extrinsic motivations on personal well-being and how Sociointentionalism (SI) can help us find a healthier, more balanced approach. Through the story of Mitchie, we'll explore how societal pressures to achieve affect people at every stage of life and how the B.E.S.T. principles—Balanced Living, Ethical Intentionality, Self-Satisfaction, and Trivita—can help us reclaim our sense of purpose and happiness.

Mitchie's Story: The Pressure to Perform

Phase 1: The Perfectionist Student

Mitchie has always been a high achiever. In high school, she was known as the "straight-A student," the one who always excelled in academics and extracurricular activities. But behind the accolades and awards, Mitchie was struggling. The pressure to maintain perfect grades weighed heavily on her, leading to anxiety and sleepless nights. She found herself obsessing over every test and assignment, terrified of making a mistake that would tarnish her record.

Despite her hard work, **Mitchie often felt like an imposter.** She was a bright student, but she wasn't a great test-taker, and the constant comparisons to her peers made her doubt her abilities. The system that judged her worth by letter grades didn't account for her creativity, her critical thinking, or her passion for learning. Instead, it **pushed her to fit into a mold** that didn't reflect her true self.

Phase 2: The Overworked Professional and Parent

As Mitchie grew older, the pressure to perform followed her into adulthood. After college, she landed a demanding job in marketing, where the expectations were just as high. She worked long hours, driven by the need to **prove herself** and climb the corporate ladder. When she became a mother, the balancing act became even more challenging. Mitchie juggled her career, family responsibilities, and the **societal pressure to be the "perfect" parent.**

The relentless demands took a toll on her health. She was constantly exhausted, stressed, and disconnected from her own needs. Despite her best efforts, **Mitchie felt like she was failing**—at work, at home, and in life. The external validation she once craved no longer brought her satisfaction; instead, it left her feeling empty and overwhelmed.

Phase 3: The Retired Professional Struggling with Identity

After years of dedicating herself to her career and family, Mitchie eventually retired. But rather than finding peace and relaxation, she felt lost. Without the constant validation of work achievements, Mitchie struggled to find her identity. **Who was she without her job, her titles, her successes?** The transition into retirement brought on feelings of depression and worthlessness, as if her value had diminished now that she was no longer "productive."

Mitchie's journey reflects the struggles many face when their self-worth is tied to external markers of success. Throughout her life, she was driven by the need to meet societal expectations, but each stage left her more disconnected from her true self. The toll on her mental and physical health was profound, illustrating the dangers of living in a society that prioritizes extrinsic motivations over holistic well-being.

How SI and B.E.S.T. Principles Could Help Mitchie

Sociointentionalism (SI) offers an alternative approach to life, one that prioritizes personal well-being and balance over external validation. Let's explore how the B.E.S.T. principles could have helped Mitchie at each stage of her journey.

1. **Balanced Living**:

- Throughout her life, Mitchie struggled to find balance. SI encourages maintaining moderation in all aspects of life, recognizing that overextending oneself in pursuit of success leads to burnout. Had Mitchie embraced a more balanced approach, she might have set healthier boundaries, allowing herself time to rest, recharge, and pursue activities that brought her joy.

3. **Ethical Intentionality**:

    - Mitchie's decisions were often driven by societal pressures rather than her own values. SI teaches us to act with positive intentions, fairness, and ethical considerations. By reflecting on what truly mattered to her, Mitchie could have made choices that aligned with her values, rather than striving to meet external expectations.

5. **Self Satisfaction**:

    - The pursuit of external validation left Mitchie feeling empty. SI emphasizes the importance of finding fulfillment from within, rather than relying on grades, job titles, or social approval. If Mitchie had focused on what genuinely brought her happiness—whether it was her creativity, her relationships, or her hobbies—she might have experienced a deeper sense of satisfaction.

7. **Trivita**:

    - Mitchie's physical and mental health deteriorated as she prioritized external achievements over her well-being. SI's focus on overall health and well-being recognizes the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit. By prioritizing self-care and recognizing that taking care of herself was essential to taking care of others, Mitchie could have nurtured a healthier, more fulfilling life.

Where Does This Leave Mitchie?

Mitchie's story is a reflection of the struggles many of us face in a society that values extrinsic motivations over holistic well-being. Unfortunately, t**his is another common problem with no personal solution because this is just how society is right now.** The pressure to perform, to achieve, and to meet societal expectations can lead to burnout, stress, and a loss of self-worth. Many people, like Mitchie, spend their lives chasing external validation, only to find themselves disconnected from their true selves.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. Everyone will face challenges in their life, whether it's the pressure to succeed in school, the demands of balancing work and family, or the struggle to find meaning after retirement. These challenges can take a toll on our mental and physical health, but they can also be **opportunities to rethink our priorities** and embrace a more balanced, intentional approach to life.

What Would You Choose?

How do you feel about our current system? Do you find yourself trapped by societal expectations, or are you able to prioritize your well-being? Sociointentionalism challenges us to rethink how we measure success and encourages us to focus on what truly matters—our health, our happiness, and our relationships. Would you prefer a system that exercises Ethical Intentionality and values holistic well-being over external achievements? The choice is yours—what kind of life do you want to create?

Keep in mind, there is no judgement because there is no set way to live life. I simply want you to consider if you are **living life to the fullest or just following the script.**

Practical Tips: Personal Well-being

In a world where success is often measured by external achievements, it's easy to overlook the importance of maintaining balance and prioritizing our health. The pressures of work, school, and social expectations can lead to burnout, stress, and feelings of inadequacy. These tips are designed to help you reframe your approach to well-being and prioritize your health, happiness, and

overall balance.

1. **Be Unapologetically Yourself**
   In a world that often pressures us to conform, it can feel daunting to embrace who you truly are. But the people who make the greatest impact are those who are brave enough to honor their interests and live authentically. **Imagine if we all had the courage to show up as ourselves, free from the fear of judgment.** The world thrives on diversity—whether in ideas, creativity, or personal expression—and your unique perspective is invaluable. **There is no one more important to impress than yourself.** When you live in alignment with your true self, you attract the right people and opportunities that resonate with who you are. Don't let others' opinions sway you from what feels right. Embrace what makes you different, and never feel the need to apologize for it. The people who matter will love you for it, and you'll make your mark by simply being you.
2. **Listen to Your Body and Mind:** Your body sends you signals when it's stressed or overwhelmed, but we often ignore these in pursuit of external success. Pay attention to signs of burnout, such as fatigue, irritability, or physical discomfort, and make time for self-care. Whether it's through regular exercise, meditation, or simply taking a break, listen to your body's needs.
3. **Redefine Success Beyond External Validation:** Where is it that you'd like to be in 5 to 10 years? Are you on the path to getting there? Society may tell you that success is measured by job titles, grades, or wealth, but true fulfillment comes from within. Reflect on what genuinely brings you **joy and satisfaction,** and go after it. Focus on hobbies, relationships, or creative outlets that make you feel accomplished on a personal level. Reframe success to align with your internal goals rather than external expectations. At the end of the day, **none of us get a round two on life.** Why spend it doing what's expected of you?
4. **Practice Mindful Reflection:** Take time to reflect on your intentions behind your actions. Are you pursuing something because it aligns with your values, or are you driven by the need for external approval? Mindfulness can help you become

more aware of your motivations and make choices that support your long-term well-being. Journaling or meditating can help you develop this habit.

5. **Embrace Flexibility:** Life is full of transitions, whether we are ready for them or not. We've all had a solid plan for the future dashed by serendipity. As uncomfortable as that is, we have to acknowledge that it's a part of life and is **essential for our growth.** Flexibility allows you to grow and adapt without losing sight of your well-being. Try to see new challenges as opportunities for growth. **This isn't easy at all,** but imagine who you'd be today without the mountains you've climbed. If we can't control the future anyway, why let it throw us off beat every time something unexpected happens?
6. **Celebrate Progress, Not Perfection:** It's easy to fall into the trap of perfectionism, especially when society glorifies flawless performance. Instead of striving for perfection, celebrate the small victories and progress you make each day. Acknowledge your efforts, even if they don't always lead to immediate success. **Remember, personal growth is a journey, not a destination, and nobody who decides they're done growing is ever correct.** You don't need to be fixed tomorrow, just better than yesterday.

By incorporating these tips into your daily life, you can begin to shift away from the pressure to perform and toward a more balanced, fulfilling approach to personal well-being.

Final Thoughts

If you find yourself pondering the point of going on, please consider the paths you haven't taken. Can you move? Can you change careers? Can you change friends? Can you change yourself? If you're considering ending the game, at least think about the parts of the map you haven't explored or even thought of. There are billions of people all living different lives. **There is a version of your life that isn't as painful as this one.** If you're feeling done, maybe start a new game instead of quitting. I'm still figuring it out, but I'm glad I still have my opportunity to find my happiness. Yours could be out there if you go looking for it.

On the B.E.S.T. Principles

The BEST principles are designed to overlap just enough to make Sociointentionalism (SI) an **airtight philosophy.** My goal was to replace all the competing ideologies in my head with a singular, intentional set of guiding principles. They needed to address every facet of life while grounding themselves in the universal truths I'd struggled to reconcile with the ways of the world.

Balance

First and foremost, we need Balance. It ties everything together because, while bad things are obviously bad, too much of a good thing always ends up being harmful. **I can't be my fullest self if I'm not allowing myself access to all my needs.** Some of those needs are pleasurable, and if I had my way, I'd spend my life chasing that pleasure. But I know that's not sustainable—no one seems happy living that way in the long run. True happiness requires finding contentment in meeting all my needs, not just the enjoyable ones.

Deciding I'll always have my needs met isn't realistic, nor is fortifying my heart to avoid the pain of lack. **I can't control that, so I have to learn to live with it.** Balance is about finding peace, even when you don't get everything you want.

Balance also regulates the other principles. Without it:

- **Ethical Intentionality** can quickly turn into self-neglect.
- **Self-Satisfaction** can lead to neglecting your tangible needs —or those of others.
- **Trivita** (Total Well-Being) can morph into imposing your ideas of mind, body, and soul on others. For example, fat-shaming often comes from a misplaced desire to "help" someone's health, but it's really rooted in comparison and control. A balanced approach saves those thoughts for private settings.

Ethical Intentionality

Ethical Intentionality means being intentional about living ethically. Ethics are subjective, shaped by context and circumstances. SI

entertains no judgment of choices but focuses on **striving to act with ethical intent as often as possible.** Personally, I can forgive anyone who didn't intend harm, even if their actions had negative consequences.

Ethical Intentionality is crucial in any community because we all make mistakes. But withholding trust from people genuinely working to improve is counterproductive. Without Balance, though, Ethical Intentionality can become obsessive. It might inflate your belief in your own understanding or keep you stuck in ethical dilemmas instead of living your life.

SI encourages slowing down and using its guiding questions to evaluate your choices before acting. One question ensures you're considering your own well-being when analyzing ethics. **Without Trivita, you might neglect your own needs, putting others' ahead of yours.** Ethics requires that your interests hold equal weight to everyone else's—no higher, no lower.

Self-Satisfaction

Self-Satisfaction prioritizes fulfillment. SI tokens were designed with this principle in mind, helping you recognize and celebrate moments of joy and accomplishment.

The world often accepts prioritizing necessities but dismisses prioritizing things that bring simple happiness—**fun for fun's sake.** Yet, as we've discussed, success without fulfillment doesn't lead to happiness. If you're not used to prioritizing joy, you'll struggle to find emotional satisfaction, even after achieving external success.

Without Balance, self-satisfaction can devolve into neglecting responsibilities. Without Ethics, it might lead to ignoring the needs of others.

Trivita

Trivita (mind, body, and soul) overlaps with Self-Satisfaction because what satisfies us isn't always what's best for us. The redundancy is intentional: too much satisfaction without Balance can backfire, and ignoring Trivita might mean neglecting yourself in critical ways.

Taking care of your mind, body, and soul strengthens you, even when the activities aren't inherently satisfying. Some people don't enjoy reading, solving puzzles, or exercising, but these actions nurture your well-being and support your broader goals. **Similarly, your soul requires connection with others**—neglecting that can leave you adrift, even if you're meeting all your tangible needs.

Just like how happy, well-paid employees produce better results for their employers, a well-fed, well-rested, and well-stimulated mind, body, and soul set the foundation for achieving your dreams. It's not just about what's fun—**it's about what sustains you.**

By integrating Balance, Ethical Intentionality, Self-Satisfaction, and Trivita, the BEST principles provide a framework for fulfillment. They're not about perfection or rigid rules—they're about making intentional choices to support yourself and your community.

Part 3: Moving Towards Sociointentionalism

Reframing your worldview is never easy. It's one thing to recognize the flaws in how society operates and another to start making changes in your own life. For many of us, this journey is filled with setbacks, doubt, and the constant pull of old habits and beliefs. But every small step counts. By working on these changes individually, we can eventually see them ripple out into the broader world.

This part of the book is dedicated to putting Sociointentionalism into practice. These aren't just abstract ideas; they're **tangible, actionable steps** that can help you shift your mindset from extrinsic motivations to a more balanced, intentional way of living. This process is deeply personal—it involves examining the way you've been taught to measure your worth, confronting internalized beliefs, and learning to prioritize your well-being.

Writing this book has been as much about helping myself as it is about helping others. I've struggled with self-esteem, finding meaning, and major mental health challenges. At my lowest points, I've dealt with the deep, aching feeling that my life didn't have the value it was supposed to have. It's not easy to move beyond that, but embracing the principles of Sociointentionalism has been a guiding light for me. My hope is that this framework can offer you the same support in your journey.

Consider keeping a journal of your impressions throughout this section. This section asks a lot of personal questions. Writing them down and reflecting on them may be helpful in the pursuit of embedding these ideas into your everyday life.

Also keep in mind that **some of this stuff is going to sound redundant because of the structure of Part 2.** This part is

specifically meant to focus on the solutions rather than the problems. If you already understand something, please skip ahead.

Addressing Right Wing Concerns About Sociointentionalism (SI)

Let me start by acknowledging something important: **most people, regardless of political stance, just want to live their lives without interference, enjoying the fruits of their labor, and raising their families in peace.** I hear that, and I agree. SI isn't about forcing anyone to adopt a lifestyle they don't want or interfering with personal freedoms. In fact, it's designed to support autonomy and respect the boundaries of others. The core belief is that we all deserve to live sustainably and ethically without subjugating others to maintain that life.

The reality is, no society thrives when built on domination or exploitation—it's only a matter of time before tables turn. The best path forward isn't through further division but by finding a way to get on the same page, preserving the things we care about while working toward fairness and mutual respect. That's where Sociointentionalism comes in.

You might usually recoil from anything that feels "left-leaning," but SI isn't about partisan politics. It's about individual and collective well-being, and it holds space for perspectives across the spectrum. If you're skeptical, here's how SI directly addresses many concerns often raised by right-wing thinkers:

How SI Aligns with Key Right-Leaning Concerns:

1. **Cancel Culture**
   SI actively opposes the harsh, punitive nature of cancel culture. Instead, it promotes accountability through balanced and ethical communication, allowing room for people to learn, grow, and redeem themselves. Open dialogue is prioritized over ostracism.
2. **Free Speech and Censorship**
   SI values the freedom to express diverse views in an environment where fairness and mutual respect are the baseline. Rather than suppressing opinions, SI encourages

discussions that foster understanding, even amid disagreement.

3. **Religious Freedom**
   SI is inherently supportive of personal belief systems, as long as they don't harm others or infringe upon fairness. It creates a space where people can practice their faith freely while contributing to the well-being of the broader community.
4. **Patriotism and National Identity**
   SI respects cultural pride and national heritage while fostering reflection on how these identities align with ethical and sustainable practices. You can celebrate your country without compromising on fairness or turning a blind eye to areas for improvement.
5. **Energy Independence**
   SI doesn't pit energy independence against environmental responsibility—it advocates for solutions that empower communities to sustain themselves while protecting the planet for future generations.
6. **School Choice and Parental Rights**
   SI aligns with empowering individuals to make decisions that benefit their families, including in education. It seeks to balance these choices with broader societal needs for fairness and access to opportunities.

Sociointentionalism isn't a set of rules to control how you live; it's a framework to enhance well-being while respecting the rights and autonomy of others. **It's about building systems where we don't feel the need to tear others down to lift ourselves up**—because that approach never lasts. Even if SI feels unfamiliar at first, its principles might be more aligned with your values than you think. It's not about left or right. It's about sustainable, respectful living for everyone.

Why Tokens Matter

Part 3 of this book is all about putting Sociointentionalism (SI) into action, and **tokens** are one of the simplest, most effective ways to do that. If you haven't already started a **Fulfillment Board**, now is the time.

Tokens were designed as a literal social currency, but their

value comes entirely from the meaning you and your community give them. They're stickers because stickers are cheap, accessible, and abundant, and they go on boards because creativity and self-expression are natural community builders. Just like trophies serve as tangible representations of achievements but hold no inherent worth, tokens symbolize progress, recognition, and intentionality—and they should be given freely, without overthinking.

When you give yourself a token, you are celebrating yourself, and as your Fulfillment Board fills up, you'll see the proof of your growth. Every token represents a step forward—whatever your goals are, however you define them, and in whatever form your board takes.

But tokens aren't just personal—they are a tool for connection and shared values. When you give a token to a friend, a loved one, or even a stranger, you are passing on a piece of your own journey. You are saying, *"This system has helped me grow, and I want to share that with you."* Just like money, tokens only have value because we decide they do—but instead of waiting for the world to validate us, we intentionally assign value to our community, our efforts, and each other.

So however you choose to use them—whether you create one board, multiple boards, or place your tokens anywhere that feels right—the most important thing is that you see your growth reflected back at you in a way that keeps you motivated.

Start today. Put a sticker on a board, or a notebook, or a wall. Decide that this is the first step toward becoming the person you've always wanted to be. **Then, imagine how it'll feel when that first sticker is surrounded by dozens more, each one proof of the journey you've taken.**

Chapter 11: Recognizing the Cycle

The first step towards change is recognizing the cycle you're in.

Extrinsic motivations aren't just random behaviors—they're ingrained patterns that shape how we live, work, and interact with the world. **Often, we're driven by external validation without even realizing it,** chasing achievements, status, or comfort in ways that leave us feeling empty. Recognizing these motivations in both personal and societal behavior is the first step toward breaking the cycle.

In this chapter, we'll explore the core elements of Egomeritism (EM) and how to identify them in your life. By understanding what drives us, we can start to make conscious choices that align more closely with Sociointentionalism.

Thoughts on AI and Aliens: This, That, and the Otherworldly

I cannot wait for the singularity. I know that's a controversial thing to say, but I'm serious. Over the past year, we've talked a lot about the fear of being killed by robots or abducted by aliens, and honestly, **I'd take either one.**

When it comes to robots, I'm far less concerned about them turning on us and more curious about what happens when they take over all our labor. The bigger question is what the powers that be will do once we get a taste of what life could be like without spending the majority of it building capital for them. When stores are staffed primarily by robots, will customers not start to wonder why prices are still so high? At what point does it all unravel, not because of the robots themselves, **but because of the questions they force us to ask?**

As for aliens, I'm excited about the possibility that they could be some kind of creator. Imagine finding out there's a grand plan,

written down and ready to be explained by beings who are clearly more powerful and intentional than anything we've known. Of course, this only works if they're not the violent, humanity-as-mirror-monster antagonists we see in movies. But honestly, even if they were, I wouldn't be as bothered as you might think.

Here's why: In fiction, communities are often unified by the presence of a **clear, external enemy.** Fantasy novels have their orcs, sci-fi stories their alien invaders, and so on. When something so clearly "other" threatens everyone equally, humanity tends to band together, at least temporarily. In our world, though, it's just **Us vs. Us.** Instead of working together on universal goals, we've decided that arbitrary traits—like sex, gender, height, or skin color—are valid reasons to divide ourselves.

So the idea of a powerful, external force being against all of us equally? That doesn't scare me nearly as much as the division we already live with. **Maybe a little outside pressure is what we need to start seeing each other as equals for the first time.**

I guess I'd like to hope that we have the capacity to turn things around without needing some doomsday scenario to play out. Just like with relationships, I think we need to be more willing to make a change rather than throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I feel like the world is always pulling toward change and yet we get so bent out of shape about being uncomfortable. Maybe its time we let go a little?

My Story: Effort, Affirmations, and Saving My Future

This project started as my attempt to change my own worldview. I thought I could create a philosophy to solve my problems, finish it, and then hand that solution to the world tied neatly with a bow. **That's not how it works.** I wasn't ready to tell anyone to love themselves when I wasn't putting in active effort to do so. I wasn't ready to ask anyone to improve their life when I wasn't committed to doing the same.

Even as I type this now, I'm looking up at my fulfillment board and the B.E.S.T. principles tracker I created. I add tokens above each principle—Balanced Living, Ethical Intentionality, Self-Satisfaction,

and Trivita—until I fill up the box. For me, it's a visual way to track my progress toward what I think of as enlightenment in terms of Sociointentionalism (SI). It reminds me that **believing something will work often makes it work.** That's why SI encourages you to put affirmations and reminders where you can see them. **Write your intention down and put it on the wall.** When you wake up and see it, the thought will be in your head whether or not you fully believe it yet.

This lesson hit home for me recently. I've been hospitalized before for mental health struggles, but this time was different. This time, I finally started therapy and admitted that I couldn't do it all on my own. After my first attempt, I did brief therapy that was incredibly practical. My therapist and I jumped straight into action—no beating around the bush, just solving problems. They gave me a list of well-being activities: yoga, meditation, journaling, exercise, poetry, and so on. At the time, I didn't really know what to ask for, so I just did everything on the list. Being the overachiever I always told myself I was, I dove into all of it.

And you know what? It worked. It really got me through that tough time faster than I'd ever expected. Turns out, literally *doing* the thing is more powerful than thinking about doing it. Who knew?

So, as we jump into this chapter, if you haven't already, I encourage you to make yourself a fulfillment board. Get some stickers for tokens. Write your affirmations and put them somewhere visible. If you want to feel better, be better, and build a stronger community, it starts when you decide to embrace the weird or awkward thing and take **intentional action** toward betterment. It might feel silly at first, but I promise it won't for long.

And while I may be biased, I can say that these simple methods have saved my future. I hope you'll give them a try, too.

What Comprises Egomeritism (EM)?

Understanding EM requires looking at its core elements—the motivations that often dictate our actions without us even realizing it. By recognizing these patterns in ourselves, we can start to make more intentional choices:

1. **Measurable Success**: Valuing achievements and success based on tangible, measurable outcomes.

    - How do you measure your worth? **A better question: how do you measure the worth of others?** Is it through grades, paychecks, or accolades? Consider how often you judge yourself based on numbers or achievements that don't fully capture who you are. Are there ways you've been defining success that leave you feeling unfulfilled?
    - You might constantly feel like you're never good enough, chase goals that don't bring joy, or struggle with self-worth when you don't hit certain benchmarks. You might even say things like "I'm supposed to be... by now!"

4. **Value of Hard Work**: Emphasizing the importance of diligence and effort in achieving goals.

    - Do you feel guilty when you're not working or being productive? **Think about how often you equate your value with how busy or hard-working you are.** What would it look like to value rest, creativity, or downtime as much as you value effort?
    - You might overwork to the point of burnout, feel shame when you rest, or push through mental and physical exhaustion because you believe it's what you're supposed to do. You may also subconsciously look down on people you feel don't work as hard as you, or feel **jealous of people who don't seem to work for what they have.**

7. **Community Standing**: Prioritizing social status and recognition within the community.

    - How often do you compare yourself to others? Do you find yourself seeking validation through likes, comments, or social praise? **Reflect on how much of your self-image is tied to what others think or say about you.**
    - You may struggle with self-esteem, feel pressured to

maintain an image, or make choices based on how they'll be perceived rather than what truly makes you happy. You may have seen an outfit you liked, or had your interest peaked, but responded with "I couldn't do that.", "That's not me", or "I'm too... to be that way."
- This applies to people like me growing up, who make it a point to do the opposite of whatever is popular in an active attempt to be different. I'd personally say this opens you up to being more yourself, **but it shows your motivations are still based on other people.** Making sure they only see your differences is still all about how they feel.

11. **Practical Wisdom**: Valuing only practical knowledge and skills that lead to success.

    - Do you downplay your creative, emotional, or intuitive skills because they don't seem as valuable? Consider how often you dismiss your passions or softer skills because they don't fit into a practical mold.
    - You might feel disconnected from your true interests, undervalue your unique talents, or follow a path that feels practical but not fulfilling.

14. **Ambition and Progress**: Encouraging the constant pursuit of personal and professional advancement.

    - Are you always focused on the next step, **the next promotion, or the next big thing?** Reflect on how often you find yourself thinking you'll be happy "when" you achieve something. What would it feel like to be content right now?
    - You may constantly push yourself without enjoying the present, feel like you're never satisfied, or sacrifice your well-being in pursuit of endless progress. You might also find yourself giving the side-eye to people who don't seem serious about their careers or future. **This could even manifest as general worry or anxiety about someone-you-love's path in life.**
    - Alternatively, you could be someone who lacks this pressure and feels like they aren't useful to the world.

Why can't your ambition in life be to be comfortable and happy? Whatever you do in the world, contributes to it. So live your life. You won't under do it.

18. **Reward and Comfort**: Seeking comfort and rewards as a measure of success.

    - Do you find yourself using rewards or comfort to justify work and relationships that don't fulfill you? Think about the ways you might be prioritizing short-term pleasures or material comforts over deeper satisfaction.
    - You might overspend, engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms, or feel like success is always just one more purchase away. **You might also be involved with someone you don't quite feel is right for you but stay because they provide some external reward or provide basic comfort.** You might even reject thoughts of change because of fear of losing that reliable comfort.

21. **Respect for Authority and Hierarchy**: Upholding social structures and hierarchies that maintain order.

    - How often do you defer to authority, **even when it goes against your values?** How often do you downplay your own abilities or thoughts due to your perceived rank in society? Do you pursue your dreams or do you not feel you've earned them yet compared to others? Reflect on moments when you've stayed silent or followed the rules because it felt safer or more expected.
    - You might feel trapped in situations where you don't have a voice, struggle with resentment, or find it hard to advocate for yourself. You might know what you're talking about but stay silent because of who you are talking to. You might also see **yourself as an authority beyond criticism** or doubt, depending on the situation.

Moving Forward

Recognizing the influence of EM in your life is just the beginning. It's about becoming aware of the patterns that keep us trapped in cycles of stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction. This journey is deeply personal and often fraught with challenges, but it's also incredibly rewarding. By shifting your focus from external validation to intrinsic fulfillment, you open the door to a more balanced, meaningful life.

As you move forward, ask yourself: **Where do these elements of EM show up in my life? How do they shape my choices and my sense of self-worth?** By identifying these motivations, you can start to make changes that reflect who you truly are, not just what the world expects you to be. Once again, the path to Sociointentionalism isn't about perfection—it's about progress, reflection, and the courage to redefine success on your own terms.

Chapter 12: Shifting Motivations

On Going Hollow and Staying Whole

While in group therapy yesterday, a few of us started talking about video games we've been playing. I mentioned *Elden Ring* and *Dark Souls*, and some people in the group lit up. One person asked how I could enjoy a game series so focused on difficulty, especially one with such a toxic and aggressive fan base.

It had already been an emotional morning, but I felt more confident than usual to share. So, I told them just how much *Dark Souls* means to me.

To me, *Dark Souls* isn't about winning, proving yourself, or brutal suffering. It has those elements, but at its core, **it's a story about a world where no one who dies ever truly stays dead.** The endless cycle wears everyone down. No rest, no reprieve. The goal of the world is to finish the game—to reach an ending where the world can reset and function the way it's supposed to.

Characters in the game who lose their will to continue the journey go "hollow." **They lose their humanity and become enemies.** They're not evil, per se—they're just exhausted. They've fought too hard for too long and couldn't find the strength to keep going. That's human. Everyone reaches a point where they're too tired to move forward.

The brilliance of *Dark Souls* is in its meta-narrative. The game itself is relentlessly challenging, pushing the player to frustration. According to the game's lore, if you put down the controller and give up, your character will eventually go hollow, **contributing to the evil of the world whether they want to or not.**

This hit me deeply when I first played it. I hated the game at first. It was grueling, unfair, and painful—but I kept coming back. Slowly, I

realized it wasn't unfair at all. It was brutally honest. The rules were clear. The world was consistent. And when I worked within those rules, I accomplished things. **Tangible,** satisfying accomplishments.

This wasn't a game that made me feel powerful like others did. It didn't hand me easy victories. It gave me tools, and I used them to earn my own success. It taught me a lesson I hadn't learned before—a lesson about pushing through my depression, my conditions, my doubts. It reminded me that it's okay to be tired, to rest, even to falter. Everyone in the world of *Dark Souls* is tired. Everyone in the real world is too.

And yet, I kept going. I found joy in small victories. I began to trust the fairness of the game's rules. I realized that I wanted to keep playing.

That's what I want Sociointentionalism (SI) to feel like for people. I want it to convince them that there are still fair rules out there—**rules we can believe in if we choose to.** I want people to understand that there isn't one "right" way to live this life, even though it feels like we're being forced into a specific mold.

I want people to experience that sense of accomplishment when they achieve something purely for themselves—not for money, not for status, but because it mattered to *them*.

Yes, it's human to go hollow. It's human to hop online, start discourse, leave mean comments, or troll. It's human to blame others, to point fingers, to retreat into bitterness and isolation. Going hollow is human.

But I don't want to be hollow. **I want to be whole,** and I don't think we can be whole without each other.

SI Methodology

Recognizing the cycle of extrinsic motivations is just the first step; the real challenge lies in shifting those motivations toward something more fulfilling and sustainable. Moving from a mindset dominated by external validation to one that values intrinsic satisfaction takes time, patience, and consistent effort. It's about

reprogramming the way you think, act, and respond to the world around you while embracing a life that aligns with your true values.

Sociointentionalism (SI) offers tools and methodologies to help facilitate this transformation. One of the most effective methods is using a **Fulfillment Board**, paired with affirmations and reflective practices, to keep your motivations visible and intentional. By tracking your alignment with the B.E.S.T. principles (Balanced Living, Ethical Intentionality, Self-Satisfaction, and Trivita), you can create a tangible reminder of your growth and progress.

This chapter provides practical steps to help you make that shift. Whether it's writing affirmations and placing them where you'll see them daily, reflecting honestly on your decisions, or setting intentional goals through tokens and boards, these tools are designed to bring clarity and motivation to your journey. **It's not about rejecting external rewards altogether but about finding balance and ensuring your actions resonate with who you are at your core.** With SI methods as your guide, the path to intrinsic fulfillment becomes clearer and more actionable.

Practical Steps to Shift from Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivations

1. **Identify Your Triggers and Patterns**:
    - The first step is to notice when and why you're driven by external motivations. Are there specific situations, people, or environments that push you towards seeking validation? **Keep a journal** of these moments to understand your patterns and triggers better.
3. **Set Intentions, Not Expectations**:
    - Instead of focusing on the outcome, focus on the intention behind your actions. For example, if you're working on a project, set an intention to **enjoy the process and learn something new** rather than obsessing over the final result. Intentions keep you grounded in the present and aligned with your values. (Remember the best movies are passion projects that

take risks. Art that is just about pleasing the most amount of people is rarely as remarkable.)

5. **Practice Mindful Decision-Making**:

    - Use the SI questions as a guide when faced with decisions. Ask yourself if what you're doing is for your happiness or just to please others. Reflect on whether your actions align with your long-term well-being, ethical considerations, and personal growth. **(If this seems daunting now, remember that in time this will become second nature, and decisions will not seem like something you need to write down.)**
    - I say thoughts matter much less than actions. Act out of the intention to make the best decisions even if you feel like your motivations aren't in the perfect place yet. Some times we need to do the right thing to get used to the idea of it.

8. **Celebrate Small Wins**:

    - Acknowledge and celebrate your efforts, even when they don't lead to the "perfect" result. Celebrating small wins helps reinforce the idea that progress, not perfection, is what matters. It's a reminder that your value isn't tied to big achievements but to the effort and intention behind your actions. (Also celebrate the wins of others whenever you can. Most of us are never taught to honor ourselves. Be an example in someone's life.)

10. **Set Boundaries to Protect Your Well-Being**:

    - Protect your time, energy, and mental space by setting boundaries with people and situations that pull you into the extrinsic mindset. This might mean saying no to opportunities that don't align with your values or taking breaks from social media to avoid comparison.

12. **Reconnect with Joyful Activities**:

- Rediscover activities that you loved as a child or before external pressures took over. Whether it's painting, hiking, reading, or just daydreaming, reconnecting with what brings you joy can help you shift your focus back to intrinsic satisfaction.

Affirmations to Reinforce Intrinsic Motivation

Affirmations are powerful tools that can help rewire your brain to focus on intrinsic values. Here are a few I use often. Try to reflect on affirmations daily, write them down, or say them aloud to remind yourself of your worth beyond external achievements:

- **"I am enough as I am."**
- **"My value is not defined by my achievements."**
- **"I choose actions that bring me joy and fulfillment."**
- **"I honor my needs and take care of my well-being."**
- **"I release the need for external validation."**
- **"I trust my inner voice to guide my decisions."**
- **"I am proud of my progress, not just my results."**

Using Questions to Solve Dilemmas

When you're faced with a dilemma, it can be easy to fall back into old habits of seeking approval or making decisions based on what's expected of you. The SI questions are designed to help you break down your choices, explore your motivations, and find a path that aligns with your true self. Here's how to use them in practice:

Scenario: You've been feeling disconnected and unfulfilled in your current routine, whether it's work, relationships, or personal habits. An opportunity arises to make a significant change—maybe it's moving to a new city, starting a new hobby, or cutting ties with toxic influences—but the fear of uncertainty and the comfort of the familiar hold you back.

Here's how the SI questions can be applied:

1. **Will this make me happy or just someone else?**
    - Reflect on whether the change you're considering is

truly for your own fulfillment or if it's influenced by external expectations. Are you holding onto your current routine because it's what others expect, or because it's genuinely what you want? **Consider challenging your comfort a bit aswell.**

3. **Is it my intention to produce the most good possible?**

    - Consider if the change will create a positive impact in your life and those around you. Are you aiming for a healthier, more balanced way of living, or is there a part of you trying to prove something?

5. **Is this fair to everyone involved, including myself, and have I considered others' perspectives?**

    - Think about how the change might affect your relationships, responsibilities, and personal well-being. **Are you neglecting your own needs to maintain the status quo,** or are you considering a path that feels balanced for all parties?

7. **Does this contribute to my growth—mentally, physically, or spiritually?**

    - Evaluate whether this change will help you grow in meaningful ways. Does it challenge you, inspire you, or help you reconnect with parts of yourself that you've been neglecting? Remember that change is painful. If its going to be easy, perhaps consider a choice that would push you to a new level, even if it's scary.

9. **Have I thought through the long-term outcomes, and am I okay with them?**

    - Imagine the long-term effects of staying the same versus making the change. Are you comfortable with where your current path leads, or do you see this as an opportunity to realign your life in a way that feels more authentic?

11. **Am I being honest with myself and aware of any biases in my decision?**

    - Check in with your fears and motivations. Are you resisting change because it's unfamiliar, or because you've convinced yourself it's too late or too risky? Are there underlying biases, **like fear of failure,** that are holding you back?

Moving Forward

Shifting from extrinsic to intrinsic motivations is a journey that requires ongoing self-reflection, patience, and kindness towards yourself. It's about learning to value your inner world as much as the outer achievements that so often dominate our focus. By using affirmations, asking reflective questions, and setting intentions that honor your true desires, you can start to make decisions that align with the life you want to live.

As you navigate your own dilemmas, remember that **it's okay to choose differently,** to prioritize what feels right to you rather than what's expected. Also remember to give yourself and others grace. We aren't always prepared to change, especially when there are **very real pressures from society to stay the same,** and numerous systems that limit our options. Each choice you make towards intrinsic motivation is a step toward a more authentic, fulfilling life. Keep asking, keep reflecting, and keep moving toward a version of success that feels true to you. Be patient, you'll get there.

My Story: The Day After, and Turning the Page

Throughout the writing of this book, I've worried about coming off as too nice. In my life, people often perceive me as a pushover. I'm usually the first to volunteer help when it seems like someone needs it. At work, that meant taking on extra projects, which eventually left me unable to manage a 40-hour workweek anymore. I've always assumed others were working as hard and thinking as thoughtfully as I was.

That assumption was tested a few years ago when I shared a home with the sibling of someone I was dating. That sibling became one

of my closest friends during the pandemic. But everything changed the first time I said no. The first time I didn't turn a blind eye or give them the benefit of the doubt, they turned on me—completely and without hesitation.

I realized then that I had only ever been a means to an end for them. **When I stopped fulfilling their needs, they discarded me.** What made it worse was that they seemed to revel in it, performing their cruelty for their partner, who sat in the other room, watching and listening. It was like a game to them, and they thrived on the power and attention they gained from tearing me down.

Eventually, they moved out. They learned I wasn't the pushover they'd thought I was. But they didn't stop there. After my first suicide attempt, they tracked me down—the day after my birthday, no less—just to tell me how worthless they thought I was.

It wasn't until last week, while scrolling through old texts, that I realized the full gravity of what they were trying to do to me. I'd completely forgotten what day it was at the time. I talked to them without understanding the meticulous cruelty of their timing. They waited for my birthday to pass, aiming to ruin whatever joy I might have found in the day.

They told me I had failed in my relationship, that I was a fraud who pretended to be better than others but wasn't. They said I would never amount to anything. I tried to respond calmly, but their words ate away at me. The only thing that got me through was my lifelong habit of forgetting about my birthday as soon as it's over.

I don't know why they hated me so much. I opened my home to them, treated them like family, played games with them, and genuinely cared for them. But I refuse to let their hatred turn me into the person they are.

This book is about turning the page and being better. I believe in the goodness of people—that **most of us mean what we say and want to be better.** But I also believe that our systems and circumstances often steer us away from that goodness. We make decisions that isolate us, that harm others, and that leave us without the friends and family we once valued.

I know I'm not the only person they've treated this way. Many of their own family members no longer associate with them. I don't want that for myself, for you, or for our world.

If Sociointentionalism (SI) can help you break down the parts of yourself that might push others away—if it can help you hold onto your connections instead of losing them—I hope you'll take these methods to heart. We all deserve the chance to turn the page.

Chapter 13: Building Supportive Communities

My Story: Letting Go, Holding On, and Growing Together

When I started writing this book, I thought I was piecing together a philosophy I could follow and then share with the world. What I didn't realize was how heavily life itself would test these principles before I even finished the project. Over the past few months, I've been thrust into a whirlwind of change that has challenged me in ways I never imagined. The biggest shift has been redefining my relationship with my former partner, who has been my best friend and closest companion. **Learning how to live together as something entirely new,** while working through pain and navigating this profound change, has been the hardest thing I've ever done.

You've got to understand—we were deeply codependent, especially after COVID. We've always been best friends, acting like silly kids together and thriving in our shared space. But our relationship had become stuck, defined by **expectations that no longer fit either of us.** Authenticity and radical honesty were the foundations of our bond, but we found ourselves holding back, pressuring one another to stay the same when we were both growing.

This chapter isn't just about theory; it's about practice. It's about what happens when you have to let go of your need to control outcomes and instead allow your relationships to evolve alongside you. It's about loving someone so deeply that you're willing to **rewrite the rules together,** even if it means facing growing pains and grief. It's about learning to bond with someone without owning them and creating relationships rooted in mutual respect and authenticity.

The truth is, the tips in this chapter aren't easy to apply. They're messy, uncomfortable, and sometimes painful. **But they are also necessary.** The most valuable relationships aren't built on attachment or control—they're built on the freedom to grow and the commitment to do so alongside one another. When you release your grip, you often find that people feel freer to stay.

As we dive into this chapter, take a moment to reflect on the relationships in your life. **Are you holding onto something or someone too tightly?** Are you allowing space for authenticity and growth, even if it means change? Building a supportive community—whether with friends, partners, or others—requires courage, self-awareness, and intentionality. I hope the insights and methods in this chapter give you tools to navigate these challenges with love and clarity.

Let's explore how we can treat ourselves fairly, foster connections that support growth, and create communities where everyone—**including ourselves**—can thrive.

No matter how much inner work we do, our environment and the people around us play a significant role in shaping our well-being. Building supportive communities isn't just about surrounding ourselves with people who uplift us; it's about creating a network of mutual aid, kindness, and understanding that reinforces our intrinsic motivations. To build these connections, we must first **start by treating ourselves fairly and finding those who respect and support us in our journey.**

This chapter explores strategies for fostering community support, starting with how we treat ourselves, selecting the right people to be in our lives, and extending support to others once we've established our own sense of intrinsic motivation.

Start by Treating Yourself Fairly

Before we can build healthy communities, we must first look inward. **How we treat ourselves sets the standard for how we allow others to treat us.** This involves recognizing your needs, setting boundaries, and honoring your values. Self-fairness is about more than just self-care; it's about acknowledging your worth and

ensuring that your actions align with what truly fulfills you.

Acknowledge your well-being by taking the time to identify what you need to feel supported, whether it's emotional space, rest, or the freedom to pursue your passions without judgment. Don't diminish your needs or push them aside in favor of others; treat them as valid and essential.

Honor your values as a part of your everyday life. Living in alignment with your values means making choices that **reflect who you are, not just what's expected of you.** This authenticity is the foundation of building a life—and a community—that supports you.

Picking Friends Who Treat You Right

Choosing the right friends is crucial for building a supportive community. The people you surround yourself with can either lift you up or drain your energy. It's important to evaluate your relationships with the same care and intentionality that you bring to other areas of your life. The SI questions can help you assess whether your friendships are nurturing your intrinsic motivations or reinforcing harmful patterns. Don't forget that you don't WANT to be friends with everyone anyway, so focus on quality over quantity of friends.

Evaluating Friendships Using the SI Questions:

- **Will this make me happy or just someone else?**
    - Reflect on how your friends influence your happiness. Are your relationships built on genuine connection, or do you find yourself pleasing others at the expense of your own joy?
- **Is it my intention to produce the most good possible?**
    - Consider the impact of your friendships. Are you able to bring out the best in each other, or do you find yourself stuck in cycles of negativity or competition?
- **Is this fair to everyone involved, including myself, and have I considered others' perspectives?**

    - Evaluate the balance in your friendships. Are they reciprocal, or do you often feel like you're giving more than you receive? Are your needs and boundaries respected?

- **Does this contribute to my growth—mentally, physically, or spiritually?**
    - Think about whether your friends support your growth. Do they encourage you to pursue your goals and explore new interests, or do they hold you back out of fear or jealousy?

- **Have I thought through the long-term outcomes, and am I okay with them?**
    - Reflect on the trajectory of your relationships. Are these friendships that will evolve with you, or are they built on temporary, surface-level connections that may not stand the test of time?

- **Am I being honest with myself and aware of any biases in my decision?**
    - Be truthful about why you maintain certain friendships. Are you holding onto people out of habit, obligation, or fear of loneliness? Are your relationships genuine, or are they driven by external validation?

By using these questions to evaluate your friendships, **you can build a network of people who truly see you, support you, and encourage your growth.** If you should find that the people in your circle aren't meeting your needs, try not to judge or blame them. They are on a growth journey same as you. Some people are in your life to teach you something so you can move forward with grace. Be thankful to them for the assistance toward your growth.

Seeking to Be Helpful to Those Around You

Once you've found your own sense of intrinsic motivation and surrounded yourself with supportive individuals, the next step is to

extend that support to others. Building a community is about mutual aid—**it's not just about receiving help** but also about being a source of kindness and support for those around you. This doesn't mean sacrificing your well-being for others; it's about **offering what you can,** when you can, in a way that feels authentic and sustainable.

1. **Be Present and Listen**: Sometimes, the most helpful thing you can do is simply be there for someone. Listening without judgment, offering a shoulder to lean on, or just showing up when someone needs you can make a world of difference.
2. **Offer Help Without Expecting Anything in Return**: True community support is about giving without strings attached. Whether it's sharing resources, offering your time, or providing a word of encouragement, help others because it aligns with your values, not because you expect something in return.
3. **Create Safe Spaces**: Be intentional about creating environments where people feel seen, heard, and valued. This can be as simple as fostering open and honest conversations, respecting boundaries, and celebrating each other's successes without jealousy or judgment.
4. **Share Your Journey**: Be open about your own experiences, struggles, and growth. By sharing your story, you not only create deeper connections but also inspire others to reflect on their own paths. Your vulnerability can be a powerful tool for building trust and solidarity.
5. **Encourage Others to Find Their Own Intrinsic Motivation**: Support your friends and community members in discovering what truly fulfills them. Whether it's exploring new hobbies, setting personal goals, or pursuing their passions, encourage others to live authentically and pursue what makes them happy. Be prepared for difficult changes during this process. **We can't be ourselves without the occasional disagreement.** Work on techniques to improve your ability to be flexible in your relationships. They can't always be what you want them to be.

Moving Forward

Building supportive communities starts with how we treat ourselves and extends outward into the relationships we cultivate. It's about creating connections that are rooted in mutual respect, kindness, and a shared commitment to living intentionally. By treating ourselves fairly, choosing the right people to be in our lives, and offering support to those around us, we can foster a sense of community that uplifts us all.

Remember, you don't have to have it all figured out to start building a supportive network. Begin with small steps, focus on what feels right to you, and surround yourself with those who encourage your journey toward intrinsic motivation. Together, we can create communities that reflect the best of who we are and support each other in our quest for a more intentional, fulfilling life.

On Comfort, Kindness, and Cultivating Connection

Being part of a community means embracing a certain level of discomfort. We tolerate plenty from our family members **because we don't get to choose them.** Even when they annoy us, we rarely consider cutting them out over minor disagreements. But when it comes to building intentional communities, the idea of being surrounded by people we don't always feel perfectly comfortable with can feel daunting. Many of us, myself included, have spent our lives prioritizing personal comfort. This cultural tendency makes it hard to imagine supporting people who think, act, or believe differently from us.

So here's my question: **Is there any good reason not to cultivate community?** Is there any valid reason not to set aside some differences to help each other out? Building empathy for people who don't share my experiences or worldview doesn't just benefit them—it benefits me. It strengthens my heart and creates tangible advantages, like having support systems in place. Community doesn't mean everyone is your best friend. It means people respect you and recognize that **your well-being is tied to theirs.**

To build this kind of mutual support, we might need to let go of some of the markers we typically associate with close-knit groups. We don't have to extend the intimacy we reserve for our closest friends to everyone, but we can still practice kindness and

connection. **Starting conversations with people outside our usual circles is a good first step**—though, let's be real, safety is a valid concern in today's world. Maybe kindness online is a better entry point for many of us.

But let's be clear: kindness and niceness are not the same thing. Kindness doesn't mean putting on a fake smile or pretending to be someone you're not. **It means treating others the way you'd like to be treated**—being honest, respectful, and fair. You don't have to be overly cheerful or outgoing to build a community. You can be reserved, even blunt, and still act with genuine kindness. Decorum and kindness are not interchangeable.

Another critical piece of this puzzle is giving people the benefit of the doubt. **Judging others based on their patterns of behavior,** rather than assumptions or gut feelings, fosters trust and connection. If someone in your community hasn't caused harm or disrupted your life, why approach them with distrust rooted in past experiences with others? I've often wished people, especially those who know me, would judge me based on my actions rather than their fears or past wounds inflicted by someone else. I imagine you'd like the same. If you wouldn't appreciate being pre-judged, try to stifle those knee-jerk doubts when interacting with others.

Finally, let's not forget how much people crave connection, even in small ways. When I worked customer service, I often fielded calls from people who clearly didn't have anyone else to talk to. They weren't really calling about their accounts—**they just wanted to feel heard.** This taught me that even the smallest efforts to connect can make a big difference in someone's day.

Building a community isn't about perfection or total alignment. It's about creating spaces where people can exist together, support one another, and grow. It's uncomfortable, yes, but also deeply rewarding.

Chapter 14: Promoting Equality and Social Justice

On COVID, Masks, and Meeting in the Middle

I'll admit, I didn't handle COVID as well as I could have. Despite having asthma, I, like much of the country, eventually decided to go with the flow. **When most people around me stopped masking, I did too.** It wasn't just about comfort; it was about the sensory overload I felt wearing a mask for hours on end while working retail. Sweating, fogging my glasses, and the general discomfort of it all made avoiding meltdowns harder than usual. When the mandates lifted, I left my mask at home.

About a year ago, I made an online friend. We hit it off, and when we started talking about meeting up in person, they asked if I consistently wore a mask. I hadn't thought about it much until that moment, and for the first time in a long while, **I felt immense shame about my choices.** I explained my reasoning and offered to wear a mask while we were together, but it wasn't enough. They called me ableist and blocked me.

Do I think they were wrong? **Honestly, no.** One of the principles I've been working through in writing this book is accepting the labels that fit. Integrity and honesty demand that I own my actions and their consequences. Labels are just tools for communication, and while they can't encapsulate everything about a person, they can reflect our choices. **If my behavior aligns with ableism, then so be it**—I need to acknowledge that, learn from it, and do better.

This whole experience got me thinking about the emotional toll COVID continues to take on all of us. Wearing something uncomfortable on your face all day is hard, especially for those of us with sensory issues. But not masking in public puts everyone at risk, especially those who are immunocompromised. Pretending

COVID isn't real, as so many of us have done, **effectively sacrifices vulnerable people for the sake of our comfort.**

At the same time, I don't believe harsh judgment helps anyone. COVID has forced all of us to mitigate risks in ways that look different from person to person. Some people may judge my earlier decisions harshly, just as I have judged others. But this isn't about judgment—it's about recognizing that labels, sides, and hierarchies keep dividing us, even in the face of a global crisis.

Think about it: if you're on the political right, maybe you avoided masking because that was the cultural norm in your community. If you're on the left, maybe you mask religiously but find yourself judging those who don't. Either way, are we really solving the problem? Or are we just **picking teams** and using those choices to feel superior to one another?

If the only reason you're wearing a mask is to feel morally better than others, **I'm glad you're still wearing it.** But I don't believe that kind of motivation is going to lead us toward actual solutions. I now wear a mask when I go out because I understand the stakes—not just for myself but for others. I've worked through my sensory issues by finding masks made of softer fabrics that don't irritate my skin. It's not perfect, but it's doable.

There's always a middle ground. **None of us should stay the course simply because we're committed to being "right."** We need to protect our health and the health of others to the best of our ability—not because of political ideology or social pressure, but because what else are we here for if not to live and let others do the same?

Promoting equality and social justice isn't about grand gestures or dedicating your entire life to activism—it's about **the small, intentional actions you take every day to advocate for fairness,** inclusivity, and respect. Everyone has a role to play, and even the simplest efforts can contribute to a more equitable world. This chapter explores practical ways to support social justice, highlighting that it doesn't require you to be perfect or devote all your time; it's about showing up where and when you can.

Advocate for What Is Right Whenever You Can

Advocacy doesn't have to be a full-time job or an official title. It's about standing up for what you believe in and supporting others in your **everyday life.** Here are some ways to advocate for equality in your own space:

1. **Engage in Calm Discussions Online and Offline**:
    - You don't have to be an expert or have all the answers to participate in conversations about social justice. Simply engaging in calm, respectful discussions—whether online or in person—can help shift perspectives and challenge harmful narratives. Share your thoughts, ask questions, and be open to learning from others.

3. **Speak Up When You See Mistreatment**:
    - If you witness someone being mistreated or discriminated against, **use your voice** to advocate for them. This could be as simple as saying something in the moment, offering support to the person affected, or addressing the issue with those responsible. **Speaking up doesn't always mean confrontation;** it can be done with kindness and intention.

5. **Practice Fairness in Your Everyday Life**:
    - Treat people fairly, **especially those who are often overlooked or marginalized** in your community, workplace, or school. Befriend or show kindness to those who are mistreated, ignored, or judged. Your small acts of kindness can make a significant difference in someone's day and reinforce the idea that everyone deserves respect.

7. **Lead by Example**:
    - People love to copy one another! The way you treat others sets the tone for those around you. By

consistently practicing fairness, respect, and inclusivity, you become a role model for others, showing that equality is not just a concept but a daily practice. **You've never been convinced something was real by a person who clearly didn't believe what they were saying.** That tells me once again, that we just have to do it. Just start without waiting to see how many people are doing it. That earnestness, is what will get others on board.

Support Social Justice Programs and Organizations

There are countless organizations dedicated to promoting social justice, equality, and human rights. Supporting these groups **doesn't have to be a massive commitment;** it's about contributing what you can, when you can.

1. **Volunteer Your Time**:

    - If you have the time and energy, consider volunteering for organizations that align with your values. Whether it's helping at a local shelter, participating in community events, or offering your skills to support a cause, your involvement can make a meaningful impact.

3. **Donate Resources**:

    - Financial contributions, however small, can help sustain organizations fighting for social justice. If donating money isn't feasible, consider donating items, sharing resources, or fundraising to support these groups.

5. **Stay Informed and Spread Awareness**:

    - Educate yourself on social justice issues and share what you learn with others. Use your platforms—social media, conversations, community meetings—to raise awareness about important causes. Being informed allows you to advocate more effectively and encourage

others to get involved.

7. **Understand the Reciprocity of Support**:

    - Remember that you never know when you might need the support of these organizations in return. By supporting social justice initiatives today, you help build a society that will be there for you and others in times of need.

Seek Diverse Friend Groups and Diverse Opinions

Diversity in your social circles can greatly enrich your perspective and deepen your understanding of the world. Surrounding yourself with people who have different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints **fosters empathy and reduces biases.**

1. **Expand Your Social Circles**:

    - Make an effort to connect with people outside of your immediate social group. Attend events, join clubs, or participate in community activities where you can meet individuals from diverse backgrounds. Embrace the opportunity to learn from those who see the world differently than you do.

3. **Listen and Reflect**:

    - When engaging with diverse perspectives, practice active listening. Don't just wait for your turn to speak; genuinely consider what others are saying. Never deny lived experiences you didn't have. Instead, reflect on how their experiences might differ from your own and what you can learn from their insights.

5. **Challenge Your Assumptions**:

    - Be open to questioning your own beliefs and biases. Diverse opinions can challenge your worldview and help you grow, but only if you're willing to listen with an open mind and a willingness to understand.

Avoid Hierarchical Thinking

One of the most pervasive barriers to equality is hierarchical thinking—the belief that some people are inherently better or more deserving than others based on their status, wealth, job title, or social position. To foster a more equitable society, it's crucial to break down these mental barriers.

1. **Recognize Our Shared Humanity**:
    - Remember that we are all human beings trying to navigate life's challenges. No one is better or worse than anyone else; we each have unique strengths, weaknesses, and experiences. Approach others with humility and a recognition of your shared humanity.

3. **Treat Everyone with Equal Respect**:
    - Avoid placing people on pedestals or looking down on others based on their circumstances. Whether it's a CEO or a cashier, treat every individual with the same level of respect and dignity. Your actions set the standard for how others should be treated.

5. **Focus on Collaboration, Not Competition**:
    - Shift your mindset from competition to collaboration. Hierarchical thinking often breeds division, but when we focus on working together and supporting one another, we create a stronger, more connected community.

Moving Forward

Promoting equality and social justice is not about perfection—it's about the everyday actions we take to support each other and create a more inclusive world. Whether it's speaking up against mistreatment, supporting social justice initiatives, embracing diversity, or rejecting hierarchical thinking, each step you take contributes to the greater good.

Ask yourself: **How can I make a difference in my community,**

even in small ways? What biases do I hold, and how can I work to challenge them? By making these intentional choices, you not only advocate for a fairer society but also become part of a movement that uplifts everyone. Together, we can create a world where respect, equality, and compassion are the **norm,** not the exception.

Final Thoughts

I often think back to a time in college, sitting at a Pride club meeting. At the time, I still naively identified as cishet, **though my dorm friends would often insist otherwise.** That night, the group decided to play a game filled with offensive jokes. It wasn't my thing, so I politely decided to sit out and read a book I had brought along. I wasn't trying to disrupt their fun; I was just happy to be there, soaking in the atmosphere.

But one guy wouldn't let it go. He kept hounding me for a reason, demanding to know why I didn't want to play. At first, I tried to be polite, but he kept pushing. Finally, I told him the truth: as the only person of color in the room, I knew I wouldn't enjoy the game if the joke turned out to be about me. That's all I said. I wasn't asking them to stop the game, just explaining why I wasn't joining in.

His reaction was anger—pure, baffling anger. Thankfully, someone else stepped in and told him to drop it, but the moment stuck with me. I couldn't understand how, in a group dedicated to celebrating diversity and inclusion, someone could be so determined to alienate me by invalidating my **very personal, very reasonable choice.**

That moment has stayed with me—not just because of the discomfort it caused, but because of the glaring contradiction. How could someone so dedicated to their own fight for acceptance not extend that same courtesy to someone else? It's a reminder of how even those who consider themselves advocates for equality can sometimes perpetuate the same hierarchical thinking and invalidation they've faced.

The steps above explore these complexities and challenge us to do better. The chapter asks us to advocate for fairness not just in abstract terms but in our daily interactions. Advocacy starts with how we treat the people around us, **especially when their**

experiences differ from our own. We're called to listen, respect boundaries, and recognize the shared humanity in everyone—not just the people who reflect our own struggles.

Whether it's engaging in calm discussions, expanding your social circles, or confronting biases in yourself and others, every small step matters. Equality isn't about a checklist or performative actions; it's about showing up, listening, and leading by example, even when it's uncomfortable.

That night in the Pride club taught me something I'll never forget: equality requires consistency. **You can't pick and choose whose differences to respect.** As you move forward, ask yourself where you might be falling short—not to shame yourself, but to grow into someone who uplifts and honors the people around you. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it. Together, we can build communities where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

Free App Idea: SI Hub

Imagine an app that combines the best of every platform you love—without the overwhelm, the ads, or the manipulation of what you see. The SI Hub would be a space where community support, personal growth, and genuine connection come together seamlessly.

At its core, this app is designed to bring people together in real, tangible ways. Whether you're looking to share your thoughts like on Tumblr, express yourself through videos like on TikTok, explore creativity like on Instagram, or dive into long-form content like on YouTube—the SI Hub would have it all. The difference? You control your experience.

Multiple Algorithms, Your Choice: You'd be able to choose from different algorithms or opt out entirely, creating your own curated feed. Want a classic scroll like Twitter or the grid view of Instagram? You decide. Prefer a blend of new voices and hidden gems over the same viral videos? It's your call.

Not Just Social Media—A Community Builder: The SI Hub would combine the social elements of Hinge and Hiki, the barter and trade system of Sibs, and the event planning features of Meetup. You could create and join clubs, organize events, and connect with

people who share your values and interests. Plus, a built-in SI tracker would help you set and meet your personal growth goals, all while earning tokens that contribute to your fulfillment board.

One App, Many Functions:

- **Personal Space:** Your profile would function like a mini-blog, allowing you to express yourself freely. You'd have the choice of public posts or private journaling.

- **Expanding Reach:** Share your creations—whether videos, writing, photos, or art—and reach an audience genuinely interested in your work, not just what the algorithm favors.

- **Fairness and Choice:** Unlike apps designed to sell to you or keep you endlessly scrolling, the SI Hub promotes fairness, transparency, and real-world impact. It would prioritize sharing lesser-known content and experiences, giving everyone a voice.

An App for Action: More than a social platform, the SI Hub would be a practical tool for building community support. If someone in your neighborhood needs help with an errand, you could volunteer. If you're hosting a movie night or game session, invite your circle (or meet new friends). Need something done but struggling with executive dysfunction? Post it, and someone can lend a hand.

Discord Vibes, Real-Life Results: Like Discord, the SI Hub would encourage group building—whether for interest-based clubs, support groups, or just casual hangouts. You could watch movies, play games, or work on projects together virtually, all within the same app.

A Vision for the Future: The SI Hub is more than an app—it's a movement toward intentional living. It's about giving you a space to breathe, to share, and to connect without the constant noise of ads and sales pitches. It's about finding your people and building something real, whether it's through lending a hand or just sharing a moment of joy.

By blending the best of social media, community apps, and practical

tools for daily living, the SI Hub aims to be a one-stop space where you can thrive. Let's create an intentional society where every interaction feels valuable and where every connection has the potential to grow into something meaningful.

Chapter 15: Cultivating Authentic Relationships

My Story: Love, Freedom, and the Space to Grow

"I'm in an open relationship with my best friend." This is a phrase I've been repeating to myself lately, trying to get used to it.

The following chapter isn't an advertisement for any particular type of relationship. All I will say is that **Sociointentionalism (SI)** promotes being our fullest selves in all aspects of life. And the way I see it now, we cannot fully embody our authentic selves if we cling to the mindset that we should control others. This isn't just about sex—though many people assume that's the primary focus.

I have no interest in jumping into the debate about how people should conduct their relationships. What I will say is that traditional structures often create an unspoken sense of **obligation**—around time, emotional support, labor, even intimacy. But here's the thing: I never expected such devotion from my friends, and **yet they offered it freely.** Now, my partner and I experience the same freedom from obligation. Our eyes, minds, and hearts are free to wander—not away, but toward the desire to keep earning a place in each other's future. Before, that future felt set in stone, which should have been comforting, but instead, it felt like a cage. When forever is the goal, you can't really relax while you're alive.

We forgive each other's faults more easily now. Maybe it's because we're no longer tied to each other in such an official way. It's easier to see ourselves beyond the other person. Relationships, as we often define them, merge two people into one. It's no wonder people talk about losing themselves and having to "find themselves again" after a breakup.

We're kinder to each other—and, paradoxically, meaner. By that, I

mean we speak more freely. There's no longer the **veneer of politeness reserved for a romantic partner.** When one of us dislikes something, we say it outright, and the other listens more readily. Perhaps it's because friends don't have to break up in the same formal, all-or-nothing way. There's an inherent understanding in friendship that you can walk away if needed, which oddly makes us more willing to adapt and improve for one another. With romantic partners, there's often an assumption of permanence, so **the urgency to resolve issues can fade.** After all, we reason, they're locked into this forever, right?

This is why I feel relationships today often encourage the bare minimum. **Egomeritism (EM)** conditions us to think of everything in terms of transaction and appearances. If the goal is to impress, you put on your best face for the first date, promise the moon, spend lavishly, and maintain the facade for as long as needed. But once you're in a relationship or married, **where's the incentive to keep up that act?** If you weren't authentic to begin with, the cracks will show. And when flaws emerge, why would you compromise your own well-being unless some external factor—time invested, societal pressure, fear of judgment—convinced you to stay?

This brings me to the topic of **maintenance.** I've always been baffled by the resistance to redefining relationships. I think it stems from how society conditions us: You make vows to always be with someone "no matter what" before you've lived through enough to know what that "what" entails. Since time travel isn't an option, **the logical solution is to avoid making such rigid promises.** But we do, and when those promises can't be upheld, we declare the relationship "broken." Why not redefine it instead? Why not let it evolve into whatever form it needs to take to keep working?

For me, becoming friends again with my partner was the necessary shift. We both resisted at first, clinging to what felt natural. But the **attachment** to "what was" was the very problem. We became instant friends in the beginning because we acted freely, without fear or pretense, and always found ourselves on the same page. Regaining that trust and freedom required letting go of the old agreements and **releasing the need to control one another.**

My partner and I are here for the time we're here. Right now, we're happy together, and we want to keep it that way. But there are no guarantees, and for someone like me, that's terrifying. Learning to sit with that discomfort is part of my journey. Yet, it feels uniquely special to know they're here because they want to be—not because a past version of themselves made a promise they feel obligated to keep.

I can think of people I might still have in my life had we shared this mindset—that relationships can change rather than end. If we'd had the freedom to grow near each other instead of placing rigid expectations, we might have found a path forward instead of parting ways.

Authentic relationships require authenticity to self. That doesn't mean everyone should be in open relationships. It means everyone should be free to explore their lives and themselves without feeling obligated to include anyone they aren't directly responsible for. In a world where we all had the freedom to be true to ourselves, plenty of forever pairs would still exist. But they'd be there not out of obligation, but because they simply couldn't imagine wanting to be anywhere else.

Authenticity in Relationships

Authenticity is more than just being yourself—it's about creating relationships where you and others are free to explore who you truly are, without judgment or pressure to conform. Relationships flourish when we prioritize honesty, intentionality, and mutual respect. Yet, these qualities require deliberate effort and sometimes, a willingness to challenge societal norms about how relationships are "supposed" to work.

Through **Sociointentionalism (SI)**, we have the tools to not only live authentically ourselves but to create a culture of authenticity in our connections. Whether it's through sharing fulfillment boards, offering affirmations, or rethinking how we define roles in our relationships, SI encourages us to be **deliberate** in how we build and nurture our bonds.

This chapter explores how to foster deep, meaningful relationships

by embracing authenticity—not just as an individual practice but as a shared journey.

Start with Yourself: Be the Person You'd Want in Your Life

Authentic relationships begin with you. If you want genuine, supportive people in your life, first ask yourself: are you showing up as the kind of person you'd want to connect with? SI encourages us to lead with our own actions, creating an environment that invites authenticity in return.

1. **Practice Self-Awareness:**
   Before you can be authentic with others, you need to understand your own values, needs, and boundaries. Use SI tools like reflective journaling or a fulfillment board to track what truly fulfills you and where you might need to grow.
2. **Be Honest About Your Intentions:**
   Authenticity doesn't mean oversharing; it means being clear and genuine about your intentions in every interaction. If you're seeking a deep friendship, a creative collaborator, or a romantic partner, express that early on.
3. **Model the Behaviors You Value:**
   If you value kindness, practice kindness. If honesty is important to you, be honest even when it's hard. Your actions set the tone for the kind of relationships you'll attract.

Build Deliberate Connections

Authentic relationships don't happen by accident—they're built through mutual effort, understanding, and shared intentionality.

1. **Set Up Shared Practices:**
   Consider creating a shared fulfillment board with close friends or partners. Use this board to celebrate milestones, set shared goals, or simply express gratitude. These visual reminders foster connection and encourage ongoing collaboration in your relationship.
2. **Be Intentional with Time:**
   Quality over quantity is key. Make an effort to dedicate time

to the people who matter most. SI encourages us to focus on the depth of our connections rather than spreading ourselves thin.

3. **Celebrate Differences:**
   Authenticity thrives when we embrace, rather than judge, the quirks and unique traits of those around us. Instead of focusing on what's "normal" or "typical," approach others with curiosity and appreciation for what makes them unique.

Share Affirmations to Strengthen Bonds

Affirmations aren't just about making someone feel good in the moment; they're about reinforcing the foundation of trust and mutual respect in your relationships.

1. **Recognize and Vocalize Achievements:**
   Whether it's a friend's career milestone or a partner's emotional growth, take the time to acknowledge their efforts and successes. A simple **"I see how hard you're working"** can mean the world.
2. **Create a Ritual of Gratitude:**
   In friendships or partnerships, consider establishing a habit of sharing affirmations regularly. This could be through notes, texts, or verbal acknowledgments. For example, at the end of the day, exchange one thing you appreciate about each other.
3. **Use Affirmations to Foster Growth:**
   Encourage your loved ones to pursue their goals and explore their potential. Positive reinforcement helps create a supportive environment where everyone feels empowered to grow.

Rethink the Rules: Honesty Over Obligation

Many traditional relationship structures carry unspoken rules that can hinder authenticity. Whether it's the obligation to spend a certain amount of time together or expectations around emotional labor, these norms can create pressure rather than connection.

1. **Release the Need for Control:**
   SI teaches us that we can't own or control others. True connection comes from mutual respect and freedom. Let go of

the mindset that relationships must follow a specific script or timeline.
2. **Redefine What Success Means in Relationships:**
   Instead of seeing relationships as something to "win" or "keep," focus on how they make you feel and whether they support your growth. A relationship that evolves to meet your needs—even if it changes form—is more valuable than one that stagnates.
3. **Encourage Open Dialogue:**
   Be upfront about what you need and invite others to do the same. Create a space where honest conversations can happen without fear of judgment or rejection.

Encourage Others to Be Themselves

Just as you work to be authentic, support others in their journey to do the same. Creating a safe environment for self-expression strengthens trust and deepens your connections.

1. **Celebrate Their Growth:**
   When someone close to you makes progress toward being their authentic self, acknowledge it. This could be as simple as saying, **"I love seeing you pursue what makes you happy."**
2. **Avoid Judgment:**
   It's easy to critique others' choices when they don't align with your own, but authenticity looks different for everyone. Instead of judging, ask questions and seek to understand their perspective.
3. **Be Patient:**
   Authenticity is a process, and not everyone will be ready to embrace it at the same time. Offer encouragement and support, but give people the space to grow at their own pace.

Moving Forward

Authentic relationships require intentionality, honesty, and mutual respect. By sharing SI practices like affirmations, fulfillment boards, and reflective questions, you can create connections that honor individuality and foster growth.

Ask yourself: **are you showing up as your truest self in your relationships?** Are you encouraging others to do the same? Building authentic connections isn't about perfection—it's about embracing imperfection, celebrating growth, and creating spaces where everyone feels seen and valued.

To top it all off, it isn't lost on me that SI in and of itself could be a tool for bringing people together. If SI helps you express your full self, **share it with others.** Knowing someone else is being intentional with their growth in the same way could be a great first talking point.

My Story: Letters, Tokens, and the Art of Connection

I have not made many friends in the past five years, but those I have made and met up with have all expressed extreme nervousness and discomfort around socializing again since COVID. While working on this book and attempting to embody these principles in myself—simply because of my understanding of them in my own head—I hit a point where I realized that the prospect of actually going out and forming a community was incredibly nerve-wracking and scary to me. My partner and I were heavily codependent, and the partner before them, who I was with at the start of COVID, was largely the same. So the idea of going out, being myself, and exemplifying ideas that were frightfully uncommon in a world of isolation was something I knew I couldn't suggest to any reader if I didn't have tested methods to get beyond those struggles.

The great thing about having a breakthrough in terms of crafting the tokens methodology was that it opened up a clear and kind way to interact with people without needing the confidence to do so otherwise. Writing a note with a very nice sticker on it pleased my roommates and brought us closer together during a time when I was too afraid to speak to anyone. So I very much lean into that these days.

I really think we could all benefit from writing more letters and love notes to our friends, family, and associates. The token can be simply eye-catching, or it can be something so aesthetically pleasing—something beautiful in its own way—that it becomes valuable to the receiver as a result. Either way, it allows the gesture to feel

even more meaningful than simply saying these things out loud. **There was effort, time, and attention put into it, and we don't give that to each other very often for free.**

I suggest leaning into written statements and notes for all forms of social interaction. I wrote a letter to someone I went on a date with. I thought I would read it to them in the moment, but I was nervous, and they were excited. So they let me off the hook and read it themselves. The letter simply explained some of my feelings about the date: that I was nervous, that I might be fidgety, and that it didn't have anything to do with how I felt about them. I also wrote generally about what I was looking for and why I was interested in them. After they read it, they seemed to really relax, and we were able to talk without the veil of anticipation about what the other person wanted. They expressed these things back to me and felt more comfortable doing so after having read my candid thoughts.

There's no way I could have said all of that out loud on my own, so I'm glad I wrote it down. A lot of times, we act as though being upfront and communicative, especially on first dates, is uncool or unwise for some reason. **I think it's only unwise if your goal is to keep someone in a situation that withheld information would knowingly make them reconsider.** And that is not how I operate.

Dating was always difficult for me because a lot of people don't want to know who you really are, despite claiming to want to find a forever partner. Or, more fairly, I think **people want you to be what they've crafted in their heads,** and too many details dissolve the euphoria of imagining some future. However, if at the end of this, we're going to stand in front of our families and claim to be capable of loving each other until the end of time, I feel like the least we should do is tell each other why we are on this date in the first place—and be honest about it.

I want to know about that breakup because it pertains to how you treat people, how you've been treated, and what you've taken from that. It's all very relevant information. We're just so used to holding back huge chunks of ourselves. EM *shrug*

But as with everything else in this book, I intend to help you take the first step and make it as painless as possible. So I've included a list of suggestions for date ideas and first meetings in **Part 4.** These

are all simple but different from the current dating culture. They will certainly help you reach whatever goal is at the end of your time with this person, rather than basing the date around looking and feeling romantic.

On Unconditional Love

If you couldn't guess, I spend a lot of time on TikTok. One concept that's been heavily discussed during the writing of this book is unconditional love. Many argue it should only exist between parent and child—that it's only through familial obligation that anyone deserves love without conditions. Personally, I disagree.

I choose to love unconditionally.

When I say that, I don't mean there's no nuance to love. There's plenty of room between love and hate, but if we think of love in binary terms—as we often do with so many things—then if I have to choose whether I'm going to turn it on or off, **I'm going to turn it on and keep it on.** I don't have the space in my mind to hold ill will toward people, even if they disappoint me or even if I decide I don't want them in my life anymore.

For me, loving unconditionally simply means believing in someone's capacity to change and grow and holding their well-being as equal to my own in my heart. The only person I've ever expressed this to is my best friend, but the principle extends beyond them. Whether or not I live with my best friend, whether or not our finances are connected, if they were to end up in a horrible position in life—even if we weren't speaking or had parted ways—I wouldn't feel better off because they were worse off.

If I were to see one of my exes on the street, homeless, that wouldn't make me happy, no matter how much harm they caused me. Sure, it might bring a fleeting moment of catharsis—a bitter spark of "they got what they deserved." I'm human, and I wouldn't deny myself that passing thought. **But their misfortune wouldn't truly improve my life or bring me fulfillment.**

Happiness, I've found, comes from fulfillment, not from winning or from anyone else's downfall. The happiest people I've met never have anything intentionally harmful to say about others. They share

facts, sure, but their intention is not to slander, harm, or inflict violence.

I seek happiness and fulfillment in this life, so I choose to love people unconditionally, at least those in my life. If someone doesn't have my best interest at heart, if I've misjudged who to trust, then they lose access to me. But that doesn't mean I stop loving them as people.

We all make decisions based on what feels most important to us in any given moment. My motivations, in those moments, always feel valid and justified to me, even if others disagree. **I choose to extend that same grace to others.** I won't revoke my love just because someone continued to follow their own path, even if it didn't align with mine. After all, isn't that what we've all been doing since the day we were born?

On Modern Dating Rules: Breaking Cycles, Finding Clarity

I don't understand the mindset of wanting relationships to fit one exact mold while also being frustrated that meaningful interactions seem so hard to come by. Meeting people clearly isn't the issue; people are connecting left and right, yet most of it seems to center around casual hookups. To me, this says the problem isn't with relationships themselves or any specific individuals—it's with how the system works and how people navigate it to fit in.

If hookup culture dominates, everyone assumes others are only there for sex, perpetuating a transactional nature among people who are really all searching for deeper connections. The issue isn't with the desire for casual interactions; it's the lack of clarity and communication about what people truly want. If I can pass along a method to cut through the noise and help people articulate their needs and find others who align with them, we could move past this drought of intimacy and real connection that so many people are stuck in.

Personally, I've never found it particularly hard to find a partner. That's because I walk up to people and tell them exactly what I want, as many times as necessary, until I get it. I don't leave

anything to chance or wait to be chosen. That approach has worked for me in terms of finding connections, but I realize not everyone feels comfortable being so direct. In fact, I've been directly told not to do this because it doesn't align with the "rules" of modern dating culture.

However, this directness has its downsides. I've been mistreated in relationships because, while I'm good at expressing my wants and needs, rarely do people align with all of them. Trying to fulfill the societal mandate to find *one person* to meet *all needs* taught me to suppress parts of myself, handling my unmet needs in silence so I could focus on maintaining the connection. Unsurprisingly, this approach failed—hence this book.

I think we're trapped in cycles of expectation, following unwritten rules about how relationships are "supposed" to work, even when those rules don't serve us. If we could just talk to each other honestly, we'd save ourselves a lot of unnecessary heartache. It might feel awkward or painful in the moment, but it's not nearly as painful as living in unfulfilling relationships—or going through a divorce. Let's break the cycles and start having those real conversations.

On Flirting with Boundaries: A Case for Casual Connection

A friend of mine recently shared a profound truth: the full breadth of human experience includes desire, excitement, and danger. It thrives on the feeling of doing something mischievous or spontaneous—on indulging in the thrill of what feels just slightly out of reach. But just as it embraces unpredictability, it also includes peace, reliability, tranquility, and commitment.

This isn't another rant about ethical non-monogamy—it's an appeal to embrace a little more excitement in life without sacrificing stability. **I'd love to normalize flirting, sexting, and even parallel play as avenues for connection.** Obviously, comfort levels vary from person to person and relationship to relationship, but I believe that the absence of excitement and fresh desire in the later stages of life can be detrimental.

The idea that we must choose between a stable, committed relationship and the spark of newness feels unnecessarily binary. Why does it have to be all or nothing? Plenty of friends flirt jokingly, and that harmless exchange brings them joy, even if they don't consciously realize it. If we can agree that flirting doesn't inherently equal sex, then why can't we reframe it as an essential form of human connection?

Intimacy often gets boxed into rigid categories, but it's a fundamental part of life that deserves to be shared more freely. If two people—and their partners—are mature enough to navigate insecurities, doubts, and the challenges of evolving relationships, then exploring indirect forms of intimacy, like flirtation or shared moments of desire, shouldn't be off the table.

Let's be real—physically compromising your safety to chase desire in 2025 is a risky game. But expecting one person to be the sole source of excitement for the rest of your life is equally unreasonable. People change, relationships evolve, and the thrill of excitement waxes and wanes. Yet, just as we learn to compromise in relationships for long-term growth, we can also learn to be flexible enough to acknowledge that attraction to others doesn't diminish the love we have for our partners.

Sometimes, the proximity of someone you're attracted to—the unspoken "what ifs" and the charged silence—can be far more exhilarating than actually acting on that desire. If we can accept that our partners might find others exciting, and still choose to reserve themselves for us per the terms of our agreements, we'd likely find ourselves in a society more connected, **less afraid of intimacy,** and far less burdened by fear of the unknown.

At its core, this isn't about losing control; it's about finding joy in human connection, even in small ways, and allowing intimacy to breathe.

Chapter 16: Nurturing Trivita

On Substances and Vices

I smoke marijuana. **I smoke marijuana every single day.**

Honestly, if I didn't have access to it, this book wouldn't exist in any form. All of this would still be a tiny grievance lodged in the back of my mind, unreachable through the constant masking and emotional labor required to keep up with life as it's presented to us. I'm not here to give you a list of reasons why what I'm doing is healthy or unhealthy—I don't care, and I don't think you should either.

What do smoking weed, snowboarding, air travel, and using our phones have in common? They're all activities designed to bring utility or pleasure, yet all come with side effects, risks, and potential dangers. Any of them could harm you, directly or indirectly. SI doesn't concern itself with what you put into your body or how you choose to live—it's your life, your body, and your decisions. Every single day, we drive cars at high speeds alongside strangers and don't judge one another for it, despite how dangerous it is. Some people love guns so much they rally for more access to them—more power to them. SI encourages us to live authentically and recognize that all decisions carry weight. Whether or not I should smoke every day is a question I'm still figuring out for myself, but the same question applies to anything we do habitually. How many times can we engage in something before the risks outweigh the rewards?

The reason I harp on this is that we need to destigmatize how people get through life. Stigmas hold us back more than we realize, especially when it comes to Egomeritism (EM).

Judgment of substances often parallels judgment of poverty or sickness. We vilify the homeless, the unemployed, or anyone struggling to meet societal standards, **tying their worth to how**

hard they work or how much they've achieved. If you're not "productive," then the things you use to feel better—substances, hobbies, or small pleasures—are deemed inferior or demonized. Meanwhile, the vices of the wealthy or successful—caffeine, exercise, dieting, expensive hobbies—are not only tolerated but celebrated. Alcohol, for example, is ubiquitous yet judged depending on how much you consume and how visible it is. It's marketed relentlessly, enjoyed publicly by the wealthy, and yet carries an unspoken shame when overindulged. Or even expensive and dangerous sports such as skydiving and rock climbing. These things are risks to the body, but are deemed as luxury activities. Compare this to video games, a pastime often labeled as lazy or a waste of time, despite being a mental exercise no different from solving puzzles or reading.

Our public performance of success and societal roles causes constant emotional and physical strain, yet we continue to the point of hospitalization or isolation from what we care about. We celebrate risk when it's glamorous (skydiving, snowboarding) but judge it when it doesn't fit our societal narrative. Why is it acceptable to berate someone for their weight under the guise of "caring about their health" but absurd to shame a snowboarder for engaging in an inherently dangerous hobby? The contradictions are endless, and they prevent us from moving forward.

These stigmas and judgments are not just social—they seep into policy and law, extending into hierarchical structures that dictate what's acceptable. This is how we get restrictions on contraception, bans on substances, and laws rooted in controlling personal freedom rather than fostering informed choices. Plenty of people, myself included, could benefit from things society stigmatizes—not because they're perfect solutions, but because **they help stabilize us.** Yet many are afraid to try or are outright denied access due to societal norms.

SI emphasizes Trivita—taking care of your mind, body, and soul. Overindulgence is never encouraged, but the threshold for what's "too much" is personal. Who am I to say when you've crossed that line? Playing guitar damages your fingers, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't play. Life is about balance and experiencing fulfillment in all forms—physical, spiritual, sexual, and mental.

For example, I read and write spicy fiction constantly. There's a stigma around consuming sexual content, as though it uniquely damages the brain compared to overconsumption of anything else. I disagree. We need to stop acting as though some pleasures are inherently worse than others. Sociointentionalism isn't here to dictate your choices. It's here to encourage self-awareness, informed decisions, and the best possible care for yourself.

That doesn't mean everything should be legal or unregulated. It means society as a whole should prioritize education and transparency, allowing us to make collective decisions about how we live and what we allow. The powerful shouldn't dictate how we experience pleasure or Trivita, nor should hierarchies keep us from being our fullest selves. Demonizing certain pleasures while glorifying others only reinforces these harmful systems. You don't have to earn pleasure. You don't have to justify how you live. Unless you are on this Earth voluntarily, **Trivita is your birthright, and it's time we stop pretending otherwise.**

Trivita: Your Life, Your Rules

Your needs are your needs. Lately, I've been struggling to get the people in my life to understand why I'm working so hard to rework how I live. As someone who has always found it difficult to enjoy life for its own sake, I can't wrap my head around continuing to cultivate an existence that feels anything less than fully realized. The idea of living just to fit in, rather than seeking true fulfillment, feels hollow. If you're not happy, what's the point of working so hard?

Sociointentionalism (SI) encourages building a life that suits all parts of your being, with balance as the guiding principle for moderation. For me, that means filling my space with tools and systems that support my well-being. In practice, **it looks like sticky note holders on my walls** for things I don't want to forget. It looks like written affirmations on display where I can see them every day. It means keeping a jug of water in my room because, in the middle of a meltdown, getting up to fetch water isn't functional. It's having paper towels in every corner of every room, along with hand sanitizer and Lysol spray. It's wearing arm warmers almost every day to minimize physical contact with the world.

These aren't frivolous choices—they're necessities that make my life the best it can be. Even for people without disabilities, dealing with a ton of minor inconveniences can add up and erode your peace of mind. For someone like me, those small obstacles can feel insurmountable without these adaptations.

In the past, this kind of approach has been judged harshly. I once had a whiteboard on my wall where I asked an ex to write reminders for me. Their response? "If you really cared about something—or about me—you'd just remember it without a childish whiteboard." Needless to say, I disagree.

Building a life that meets your needs isn't childish or selfish; it's necessary. Your home and your routines should reflect what helps you experience Trivita—the harmony of mind, body, and soul—to the best of your ability. Whatever that looks like for you, it's valid, and it's worth pursuing unapologetically.

Here are the insights I've gained about embracing *Trivita* and finding balance in the pursuit of mind, body, and soul health:

Mind: Cultivating Peace and Growth

1. **Let Go of Perfectionism:**
    - Your thoughts don't need to be perfectly aligned for you to act. Growth comes from trying, stumbling, and trying again. Progress is more important than perfection.
3. **Prioritize Rest and Play:**
    - Mental well-being isn't achieved through constant productivity. Schedule time for leisure and joy, without guilt. Your mind needs moments of relaxation as much as it thrives on challenge.
5. **Celebrate Small Wins:**
    - Acknowledge every step forward, no matter how small. Whether it's learning a new skill or simply getting through a tough day, those moments deserve

recognition.

7. **Be Curious, Not Judgmental:**

    - Approach your thoughts and actions with curiosity instead of criticism. Ask yourself, “What can I learn from this?” instead of, “Why did I mess up?”

Body: Treating Yourself with Respect

1. **Move with Joy:**

    - Exercise doesn’t have to be punishment. Find movement that makes you feel alive—whether it’s dancing, walking, or yoga—and let it become a celebration of your body’s capabilities.

3. **Embrace Moderation:**

    - Restriction and overindulgence both lead to imbalance. Allow yourself the foods and activities you love in a way that feels nourishing, not excessive or guilt-inducing.

5. **Rest Is Essential, Not Optional:**

    - Your body is not a machine. Sleep, relaxation, and downtime are as vital as staying active. Listen to what your body needs, and honor it.

7. **Care for Your Body, Not Just Its Appearance:**

    - Health isn’t about looking a certain way; it’s about feeling strong, capable, and connected to your physical self. Shift your focus from appearance to how your body enables you to experience life.

Soul: Finding Meaning and Connection

1. **Honor Your Unique Self:**

    - You are not a project to be completed or a problem to

be fixed. You are a whole person, worthy of love and respect exactly as you are. Embrace your quirks, passions, and individuality.

3. **Connect Authentically with Others:**

    - Relationships that nurture your soul come from authenticity. Be honest about your needs and desires, and surround yourself with people who support your journey.

5. **Embrace the Role of Beginner:**

    - Life is full of opportunities to learn and grow. It's okay not to know everything. Lean into the process of becoming, and allow yourself the freedom to explore without judgment.

7. **Balance Self-Reflection with Action:**

    - Introspection is valuable, but true growth comes from action. If you want to feel better, do better. Align your actions with your values, even if it feels awkward at first.

The Journey to Balance

- **Acknowledge That Balance Is Dynamic:**
    - Balance isn't a fixed state—it's something you constantly adjust to meet your evolving needs. Some days you'll focus more on rest, others on action, and that's okay.
- **Treat Rest and Joy as Non-Negotiables:**
    - Trivita isn't about earning joy or relaxation. These are fundamental aspects of life that you deserve, simply for existing.
- **Trust in Small Changes:**

- Grand transformations rarely happen overnight. Start small. Make one change that aligns with your well-being and let it build over time.

Finding Balance in Your Own Life

Trivita doesn't come from rigid rules or all-or-nothing thinking. As with everything else, Trivita loops back around to Balance.

1. **Don't Throw Away the Junk Food; Practice Moderation**
   You don't need to banish all your favorite foods to be healthy. Negative feelings around food and health often make things worse, leading to guilt, stress, and a poor relationship with eating. Instead of focusing on restriction, aim for balance. Enjoy the foods you love in moderation, and focus on nourishment rather than punishment.

   - **Try something for me:** Next time you have a meal at home, cut the entire meal in half and just eat that. If after an hour or so, you're still hungry, go grab the rest. In the mean time though, **pay attention to how you're feeling.** Do you need the portions you normally eat or are you just used to them?
   - **Consider This**: What's your relationship with food? Do you often feel guilty for indulging, or do you view meals as a source of pleasure and fuel? Embrace a mindset that allows for both enjoyment and health, recognizing that food is not just about nutrition—it's also about culture, connection, and comfort.

4. **Rest is Part of a Balanced Life**
   Rest is not a luxury; it's a necessity. Your body and mind need downtime to recharge and function at their best. Pushing yourself to be productive all the time is a recipe for burnout. Embrace rest as an essential part of your well-being, and don't feel guilty for taking breaks.

   - **Try This:** The way I survived all-nighters in college was my "1 on 1 off" method. This involves doing a single hour or work for every hour of rest. I set a timer and switch between work and a video game usually. I find

that I get so much more done because I always feel like I'm just getting started. Also, after a few cycles, the work time starts to seem incredibly short. I find myself surprised when the hour is up.
- **Consider This**: Do you give yourself permission to rest, or do you feel like you always have to be doing something? Reflect on how you can incorporate more rest into your routine without feeling like you're wasting time. Remember, **rest is productive.**

7. **Have Fun and Be with Friends**
Leisure isn't something you have to earn—it's your right. You're not here just to work and produce; you're here to experience joy, connection, and all the beautiful, messy parts of being human. Spend time doing things that make you happy and be with people who lift you up.

    - **Consider This**: How often do you prioritize fun and connection? Are you allowing yourself time to relax and enjoy life, or are you constantly putting off leisure until you've "earned" it? Challenge the idea that joy has to be deserved; it's a fundamental part of your well-being.

9. **When You Do Work, Give It Your Best Within Reason**
Work can be a source of accomplishment and pride, but it shouldn't come at the cost of your health. When you engage in work—whether it's your job, a hobby, or personal projects—give it your best effort, but set reasonable limits. Overworking leads to burnout, while perpetual rest can make you feel stagnant.

    - **Try this:** When you are working, set up a series of preset checkpoints for yourself. Progress can be tracked however you like. The only rule is to set the checkpoints before you get started and try to stick to them. Whenever you hit your goals, you will feel motivated to continue. Sometimes we have to trick our brains into acknowledging our good work.
    - **Consider This**: Are you finding balance between effort and rest? Reflect on how you can approach your work

with passion and dedication while also knowing when to step back and recharge.

My Story: Sluts, Smut, and Self-Acceptance

I consider myself an ethical slut. Not just because I've read *The Ethical Slut*, but because I believe reclaiming words and titles is important. Sociointentionalism (SI) encourages us to accept labels that fit our actions, **even if they've been framed negatively.** That said, I don't see "slut" as inherently negative.

I'm an aspiring spicy writer with a long list of ideas. I regularly consume pornography and masturbate—habits I've had for most of my life. I'm in an open relationship of sorts and have gone on several dates recently, each with a different person. These are facts about me, and they've taken years to fully accept. Raised in a staunchly Christian environment, I struggled for a long time with guilt and shame around my sexuality.

I know many people would judge these choices, and I accept those judgments. But here's why I'm sharing this: Writing this book has made me realize that I can't truly be fulfilled while feeling guilty for wanting to use parts of my body that I was born with. **I can't reconcile the idea that there's virtue in deliberately *not* using them**—or in only using them within narrow legal or philosophical frameworks.

Like all human experiences, sexuality can be positive or negative. **Anything that triggers intense brain chemistry has the potential for misuse or addiction.** But we live in a world where we pick and choose which unhealthy behaviors are acceptable, and I struggle to understand why sexuality is so often positioned as an ultimate evil.

Look at BookTok—it's dominated by smut. Why? Because people want to feel good. They want to imagine pleasurable social interactions in a world that often feels isolating. There's nothing inherently wrong with that. I especially don't understand why a movie like *Deadpool 3* can open with a gleeful musical montage of slaughter, yet a novel featuring consensual, detailed sex scenes is considered unacceptable. Are we oversaturated with depictions of

sexuality or violence? Does it matter what's marketed toward adults?

This matters to me because *Trivita*—total well-being—means accepting yourself and your needs. For most of my life, I aggressively suppressed my desire for intimate social interaction. That suppression led me to a place where I genuinely believed I had no future worth living. Looking back, it's clear I was ignoring a core part of my nature.

Now, I embrace the fact that I have the personal desire and capacity to engage ethically in a variety of intimate social interactions. If you're able to live in a way that satisfies you, improves your mind, body, and soul, and aligns with ethical moderation, SI says: Go for it.

Why Trivita Matters

Embracing *Trivita* isn't just about improving your life—**it's about being a better, more compassionate person for the people around you.** When you care for your mind, body, and soul, you show up more fully in your relationships, your work, and your community. This isn't a way to fix the world overnight, but it's a path toward building a life where you feel fulfilled, balanced, and ready to contribute your best self.

Total well-being begins when you choose to prioritize yourself—not in a way that disregards others, but in a way that allows you to bring your whole self to the table. As you explore the balance of *Trivita*, remember that every small step toward harmony is a victory worth celebrating.

On Discomfort, Growth, and Finding Courage

I think we could all benefit from being a lot less comfortable. Over the past year, many of the debates I've seen online have revolved around comfort—and the guilt tied to it. Whether we're arguing about whose needs should come first or who deserves the public spotlight, we're often expressing discomfort at seeing things we'd rather not confront. Beneath it all is the nagging awareness of what we could or should be doing to help, and the unease of knowing we

aren't acting.

I get it. The world is a hard place, **especially lately**, and asking people to step into discomfort on behalf of others feels like a hard sell. But here's the thing: Is discomfort something that will cause you lasting harm, or is it just something you don't enjoy? There are countless things we don't enjoy that are still necessary. I, for one, don't like deliberate exercise, but I know I need it.

The idea that we can build a society that prioritizes tolerance and acceptance while avoiding discomfort entirely doesn't make sense to me. Over the past year, we've spent a lot of energy questioning why **other people** aren't willing to take on the hard tasks necessary to dismantle harmful structures like fascism. But here's the catch: We point fingers because the thought of acting ourselves feels far too uncomfortable. So, we wait. We sit in our discomfort, paralyzed, hoping someone else will do the work.

I don't think it's because people don't care—**I think most people do.** But they don't know where to start, and they don't have the energy to figure it out. That's why I'm suggesting something small but transformative: **Sit with your discomfort.** Slow down and really feel it. Recognize that it's just a feeling, and feelings don't last forever. Discomfort won't kill you.

Ask yourself why you feel this way, with the understanding that confronting the discomfort will eventually diminish it. In the same way that building authentic relationships requires pushing through awkwardness, personal growth requires pushing through discomfort. If someone or something makes you uncomfortable, challenge yourself to reduce that discomfort—not by eliminating the thing that triggered it, but by examining why it triggered you in the first place.

When we prioritize comfort above all else, we subjugate people. We ignore their suffering and perpetuate harmful systems because the work of challenging those systems feels too hard. But if we can learn to sit with discomfort, to make peace with it, we open the door to genuine progress and connection.

Chapter 17: Redefining Success

On Kids and Kindness

Why do we hate kids so much? I saw the new movie *Mufasa* recently. I enjoyed it—I thought the music was lovely, the visuals were amazing, and it was overall a cute experience. The cinematography stood out to me as even better than the previous remake, and while it traded some of the original's nature-documentary realism, it added enough vibrancy to feel more appealing to children.

And that's the key here—children. Because this is a *Disney movie*, made for kids. Yet it seems like people have forgotten that movies can and *should* sometimes be just for them.

I went to film school, so this stuff is important to me, and I hope you'll bear with me while I unpack it. Take the first *Lion King* remake. There's a scene where Simba and Nala visit the elephant graveyard, and the hyenas emerge. At first, the tone is genuinely scary—a moment of real tension. But then it flips, and the hyenas crack jokes. As an adult, it killed the mood for me on the first watch. It felt like a missed opportunity for drama.

On a rewatch, though, I realized it wasn't made for me. Kids would be terrified by those hyenas if the tension wasn't broken. The jokes gave them a way to laugh and enjoy the scene without being overwhelmed. It wasn't about adult sensibilities; **it was about creating a balanced experience for its target audience.**

And yet, as adults, we consistently talk about media as if children don't exist—or, worse, shouldn't exist. We act like things should cater to *our* tastes first, as if we didn't all start as children, and as if their happiness and comfort are somehow less important.

This chapter is about success and redefining what it means to build

a fulfilling life. And I believe that starts with childhood. A fulfilled adult begins as a child who is treated like a **full human being**—valued, listened to, and supported. That includes having things in the world that are made just for them, even if they don't also appeal to us.

The push for movies to appeal to "everyone" isn't about art; it's about profit. And it's harming both kids and adults. We've created a culture so afraid of being earnest or vulnerable that even children's media feels cynical. Look at superhero cartoons today: they parody the trend of superhero media instead of earnestly exploring heroism. No wonder kids feel apathetic—they're fed media that mirrors our adult disillusionment instead of inspiring them.

I didn't care about wealth or status when I was a kid. I cared about toys, games, and the joy of being alive. But kids today are increasingly obsessed with brands and appearances because we've let algorithms and consumerism take over their lives. And then we complain when kids "act like adults" too soon, without considering how much of that is our fault.

We've been handed a deeply flawed system that neglects children in favor of profit and efficiency. School often feels like an assembly line—standardized tests, scantrons, and repetitive lessons—designed to push kids through, not help them thrive. **I left high school knowing more about what I *didn't* want to do than what I did.** I felt like I'd been on autopilot for 12 years, just checking boxes, while the world's richness and complexity were kept out of reach. (Why was 12th grade the first time I heard the word Anglo-Saxon? Why did I spend 12 years studying English but never learn the history of the language I was speaking?)

And let's not ignore the bigger issue here: safety. We live in a world where schools aren't guaranteed to be safe spaces because protecting profits takes precedence over controlling the mass proliferation of weapons. How can kids thrive when even their most basic need—safety—isn't assured?

A society that mistreats its children will never achieve equity or fairness. Whether you have kids or not, whether you go to kids' movies or not, it's time to shift our mindset. Kids cry. They make noise. They need things from us—just like we needed things when

we were their age. **If we didn't get those things, it doesn't mean we should withhold them now.**

The next time a kid's laughter, tears, or energy annoys you, ask yourself why their needs feel less important than your momentary discomfort. **Because no one will be here to maintain this society if we don't honor, nurture, and support its youngest members.** You cannot build an intentional society without investing in its future. And if you're waiting for the next generation to magically fix what we've broken, then the least you can do is give them the tools to succeed where we failed.

Redefining Success: Why Is Money the Only Measure?

Success is often portrayed as a straightforward formula: work hard, earn money, and accumulate achievements. But what if success isn't just about what you have or how much you earn? What if it's about how you feel, who you connect with, and the life you build that reflects your true self? In a world that constantly measures worth by material gains, redefining success through the lens of intrinsic motivations and community support offers a more fulfilling and sustainable path.

We live in a world where success is often equated with financial stability, social status, and tangible achievements. But these aren't the only ways to define a successful life. Here are some alternative measures of success that offer a richer, more meaningful perspective:

1. **Having Friends and Building Relationships**
   Success can be found in the connections you make. Being surrounded by people who support you, challenge you, and share your joys and struggles is invaluable. Friendships enrich your life in ways that money never can, providing a sense of belonging and community.

    - **Consider This**: Are you investing enough in your relationships? Reflect on the importance of friendships in your life and how they contribute to your sense of fulfillment.

3. **Being a Person Others Speak Highly Of**
   Your character and how you treat others are powerful measures of success. **Being known as someone who is kind, reliable, and empathetic holds far more value than any job title.** The legacy you leave through your actions and how you impact those around you defines a lasting success.

   - **Consider This**: What qualities do you want to be remembered for? Think about how your everyday actions shape your reputation and the way people feel when they interact with you.

5. **Being Skilled at Hobbies and Trades That Make You Happy**
   Success doesn't have to come from a traditional job or career. Finding joy and mastery in hobbies, crafts, or any activity that brings you happiness is a valid and rewarding form of success. Whether it's painting, gardening, or playing an instrument, these pursuits enrich your life in unique ways.

   - **Consider This**: Are you making time for the activities that light you up? Reflect on the hobbies or skills that bring you joy and how they fit into your definition of success.

7. **Shaping Your World and Life the Way You've Dreamed It to Be**
   True success lies in creating a life that reflects your values, dreams, and passions. It's about having the freedom to make choices that align with who you are, whether that means traveling, starting a business, or simply finding peace in your everyday routine. Comfort is a wonderful thing, but growth often happens when we step out of that comfort zone and embrace new challenges.

   - **Consider This**: Are you living a life that feels true to you, or are you following someone else's idea of success? Think about what your dream life looks like and what steps you can take to move closer to it, even in small ways.

Moving Forward

Redefining success isn't about rejecting the traditional markers of achievement—it's about expanding the definition to include the things that truly matter to you. It's okay to want comfort and security, but don't lose sight of the relationships, passions, and personal growth that bring your life meaning. Success is not just about what you have; it's about who you are, how you live, and the impact you make on those around you.

Ask yourself: **How do you define success?** Are you chasing goals that align with your values, or are you following a path that society has laid out for you? By embracing a broader, more inclusive view of success, you open yourself up to a life that feels rich, fulfilling, and uniquely yours. Success isn't a one-size-fits-all concept; it's a personal journey, and you have the power to define it on your own terms.

Unhinged Rant Targeted at Parents from Somebody Far Older Than They Ever Thought They'd Be Due to *Ideation Brought on by Well-Intended, Deeply Neglectful Parents*

Apologize to your kids! Just do it! When you were a kid and nobody ever apologized to you, you were pissed off! You're not right all the time, and doing your best doesn't guarantee success! So when your kid tells you something you did negatively affected them, **accept it!**

Only the customer's review matters when it comes to the chef's food, and if the food was REALLY nasty, even if you didn't mean to cook it that way, they're still going to have strong emotions about it! So give them a break because you're the one who wheeled them into the restaurant and forced unordered food down their throat!

You did what you had to do with the choices you had to make, sure, but you can't possibly think you were perfect! Listen to your kid and just say sorry—**early and often**—so you can have a relationship with them when they're adults.

It is not a matter of IF kids SHOULD "honor" their parents no matter what. It is present year, therefore assume they will not. You

get to be frustrated at the relationship you have with anyone, but it takes two to tango.

Conclusion

As we come to the end of this journey, it's important to reflect on the key ideas we've explored and consider how they can be applied to our own lives. Sociointentionalism (SI) offers a path that prioritizes balance, ethical intentionality, self-satisfaction, and trivita. In contrast, Egomeritism (EM) often traps us in cycles of external validation, hierarchical thinking, and the relentless pursuit of measurable success.

Summary of Key Points

- **Sociointentionalism (SI)**: SI is about living with purpose and aligning your actions with intrinsic motivations. It encourages us to find fulfillment from within, to live according to our values, and to cultivate relationships and communities that reflect our true selves. SI is not about rejecting all external rewards but about ensuring that our pursuit of them doesn't overshadow what truly matters: our happiness, our growth, and our connection to others.
- **Egomeritism (EM)**: EM represents a mindset driven by extrinsic motivations such as measurable success, status, and the need to conform to societal expectations. It often leads to burnout, dissatisfaction, and a disconnect from our authentic selves. While hard work and ambition have their place, EM's focus on external validation can leave us feeling empty, constantly chasing a version of success that doesn't align with who we really are.
- **The Benefits of Shifting Towards SI**: By embracing SI, you prioritize your well-being, foster meaningful relationships, and create a life that feels rich and fulfilling. Shifting your motivations from extrinsic to intrinsic allows you to redefine success on your own terms, find joy in everyday moments, and build a supportive community that uplifts you. SI isn't about perfection; it's about progress, reflection, and living

intentionally in a way that honors all parts of yourself.

Call to Action

As you close this book, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your own motivations. Are you living in alignment with your values, or are you caught in the cycle of external validation? Remember, this is a lifelong journey, and it's okay to stumble along the way. Be kind to yourself, give yourself grace, and embrace the imperfect nature of growth.

- **Be Kind to Yourself**: You won't always make yourself proud, and that's okay. Perfection is not the goal—authenticity is. Allow yourself the space to learn, grow, and change without judgment.
- **Give Yourself Grace**: It's easy to be hard on yourself when things don't go as planned, but every mistake is an opportunity to learn. Treat yourself with the same compassion you would offer a friend.
- **My Personal Favorite Affirmation**:
  "I embrace imperfection as part of my journey. I do not need to be perfect in order to be worthy."
  This affirmation serves as a reminder that your value doesn't come from flawless execution or constant achievement; it comes from being human, with all the beautiful messiness that entails.

If you found this book helpful, please consider sharing it with others. The ideas of Sociointentionalism grow stronger when they are part of a broader conversation. Together, we can create a world that values balance, intentionality, and genuine connection. Thank you for taking this journey with me—I hope it has inspired you to live a life that feels true to you.

On Radical Honesty: The Risk of Being Real

Part of writing this book is proving to myself that I can practice what I preach. That means being radically honest—not just about philosophy, but about my own life, my own relationships, and my evolving perspective. As I near the end of this project, I feel differently about things than I did even a week ago. That doesn't

mean I've abandoned my values; it means I've deepened my understanding of what I actually want by fully embracing them.

At one point, I considered editing or softening some of these essays to avoid upsetting people in my life who know I'm writing this. But the fact that I even had that concern is exactly why Sociointentionalism (SI) exists. This isn't a book about making people comfortable—**it's about honesty, intentionality, and growth.**

Right now, I'm working on a birthday present for an incredibly important friend. We've known each other for years, but recently, something shifted. We connected on things I had long assumed I needed to hide because they didn't fit into some societal standard I felt obligated to uphold. They, however, were already comfortable in the space I wanted to inhabit. That created an interesting dynamic—one where I was both attracted to them and inspired by them. SI tells me that's a good thing. I see them as my equal—not as something to conquer, but as someone I genuinely want to support, respect, and grow alongside.

And yet, I know that if we had gotten close when we first met, it would have ruined my personal journey, my relationship with my current partner, and maybe even their own path. Timing is everything. The spooky way life lines things up no longer surprises me. (Hint hint—maybe I'm writing more books?) What I do know is that this friendship, at this time, is exactly what I needed to confirm that the kind of life I imagined is actually possible.

So I've made a decision: I'm not changing or removing anything in this book.

The two people I've been connecting with now—outside of the strict relationship structures I once knew—aren't just helping me finish this book. They represent the lifestyle I now see as attainable. Does that mean we're forever? Maybe not. But forever isn't the point anymore.

What matters is that we're here, now, sharing something real. I've told them as much (and they're literally helping me edit this—hi!). No decisions have been made, because life isn't easy, and intentional choices take time. What I do know is that the way they

have treated me—before even knowing about this book—exemplifies everything I've been trying to put into words.

For so long, this book has been my attempt to be understood—to explain something I've been trying to articulate since I was a kid. And now, right as I finish it, I've met two people who just *get it*. That's what SI is meant to foster—connections built on authenticity, where people don't have to be convinced to care because they already do.

Radical Honesty, Without Fear

The purpose of SI is to make this possible for everyone. Anyone can claim to be a Sociointentionalist, but it's only through intentional action that you can actually be one. You don't get to just say, *"I believe in SI,"* and expect that to mean something. You have to live it.

That doesn't mean people won't make mistakes. It doesn't mean everyone who follows SI will stay friends forever. But it does mean that we will all recognize each other's intent—to build community, to grow, to be better. And that alone creates a foundation of trust that's been missing for far too long.

This is how we know who's on our team again. SI isn't about vague ideas of kindness or self-improvement—it's about tangible action. You will know a Sociointentionalist by their actions, not just their words. If you struggle to find community, if you feel like no one understands you, this is the way forward.

I don't know what you should do if you're attacked. I don't have a perfect answer for how to navigate a world that is actively fighting against change. But I do know that a Sociointentionalist will always try to make the best decision possible, regardless of what's at stake.

And right now, I just want to trust people again.

Take the risk and consider radical honesty. Not just in the big moments, but in the small ones.

Tell people how you feel. Give them the opportunity to understand you. If they don't—if they can't—then you get to decide if you want

to keep them in your life. But at least you gave them a fair chance. Try different approaches. Give them time. Give yourself time.

We don't have to be afraid of honesty. Anything can be said with kindness. Not everyone will like what you have to say, but if you were acting in alignment with SI—if you approached it with Balanced Living, Ethical Intentionality, Self-Satisfaction, and Trivita in mind—then you did your best and you're a Sociointentionalist.

Cover Explanation

The night I wrote the newest draft of the introduction for this book, I was jotting something down on a sticky note. The light was dim, so maybe that contributed to what happened, but I went to write "H-O-W" and instead wrote "Z-O-H." As my hand traced the letters, I felt an odd pinch in my brain. I could sense something was off, but it didn't register until I'd finished writing.

In a fit of excitement (and with a mental reminder of my worry that I might be minorly clairvoyant because things always seem to line up weirdly), I grabbed the note, wrote what I had originally intended to, and taped it into an open spot at the top of my fulfillment board. I'd noticed the spot earlier when I finished setting up the board—it was just the right size for something, though the thought had come and gone. That night, **I knew it meant something,** so I put it there.

I decided to make it the cover of this book because ever since I was a kid, I've known there was something different about how my brain worked—something I couldn't quite name. Occasionally, I'd write things completely wrong, and even now, I sometimes imagine the wrong letters for words in my head. Once, as a child, I remarked on the "acronym" A&W of A&W Root Beer, believing in the moment that A and W were somehow analogous to R and B. I have no idea why this occurred, but it was met with confusion from my family and no further investigation.

Things like this happened a lot growing up. I'd have meltdowns triggered by noise, struggle to make friends, or feel completely out of sync with the world around me. There were constant signs that something was off, but no one ever asked if my brain itself needed

support. As an adult, I rarely write longhand, so I haven't recreated this exact phenomenon in years.

I chose this image for the cover because I need help understanding what this might mean. If it's tied to some neurological condition or trait, I'd love to learn about it—and if I do, I plan to dedicate part of my second book to sharing that knowledge. Along with that, I'll include everything I've compiled over the years on how to best accommodate needs like mine. I call it The Protocol.

I'm neurodivergent, and many of my comforts are non-negotiable depending on the day and my mood. I've been in situations where accommodating those needs was dismissed as childish. If you haven't noticed by now, not doing something simply because it can't be done in the traditional way is just not how I operate.

If you want to hear more about my journey and learn how sticky notes and a few other small tools changed my life—allowing me to write this book in the first place—please let me know. Share #SI around, and let's build a community focused on self-improvement and understanding. I'll help in any way I can.

-Signed Casey

Part 4: Extras

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SI Methods Refresher

Reflection with the SI Questions

Use these questions to guide your decisions and align them with your values:

- Will this make me happy or just someone else?
- Is it my intention to produce the most good possible?
- Is this fair to everyone involved, including me?
- Does this contribute to my growth—mentally, physically, or spiritually?
- Have I thought through the long-term outcomes, and am I okay with them?
- Am I being honest with myself and aware of my biases?

Tokens and Fulfillment Boards

Tokens and boards are visual tools to help you celebrate your progress. These aren't about real metrics or rigid goals but serve as a playful, low-pressure way to reflect on and appreciate your journey. Tokens can be placed whenever you feel like celebrating a small win, regardless of how big or small. They remind you that

success is arbitrary and that every day is equally valuable. This method isn't about tracking perfection but about enjoying the process of growth.

Acting Before Believing

Sometimes action must come before conviction. Instead of waiting for motivation or confidence to appear, start with small, intentional steps. As you act, your belief in your ability grows naturally. This approach focuses on progress, not perfection, and helps you avoid the paralysis of overthinking.

Slowing Down and Embracing Low Pressure

This method is about letting go of rigid expectations and arbitrary markers of success. Life is finite, and every day carries equal weight —there's no need to rush or measure yourself against unrealistic standards. Slowing down creates space to act intentionally and enjoy the present moment. By embracing a low-pressure mindset, you give yourself permission to grow and change at your own pace, making room for self-compassion and sustainable well-being.

Continued Compromise

SI emphasizes the importance of patience and perseverance in relationships. By staying open to communication and allowing time for mutual growth, you create opportunities for deeper connection and understanding. This method focuses on resolving conflicts and fostering trust, reminding us that meaningful relationships often require effort and intentionality from both sides.

Community Building

SI encourages the cultivation of supportive communities through authenticity, honesty, and mutual growth. By creating safe spaces where others can be themselves, you foster a network of trust and shared values. This method focuses on cooperation rather than competition, helping everyone thrive.

Why SI?

Egomeritism (EM) holds us back by trapping us in cycles of external validation, competition, and unattainable standards of success. It

prioritizes measurable achievements over genuine fulfillment, leaving us disconnected from ourselves and others.

Sociointentionalism (SI) helps the world by helping us break free from these limiting patterns. It encourages us to focus on intrinsic motivations, align our actions with our values, and nurture personal well-being. By improving ourselves through balance, intentionality, and authenticity, we create ripple effects that strengthen our communities and inspire positive change.

Core Tenets of Egomeritism (EM)

1. **Measurable Success**: Prioritizing external achievements like wealth, titles, and grades as the ultimate markers of value.
2. **Value of Hard Work**: Emphasizing relentless effort and productivity as the only paths to success.
3. **Community Standing**: Measuring worth by social status and recognition within a group.
4. **Devaluation of Inner Wisdom**: Overlooking creativity, emotional intelligence, and intrinsic joy in favor of practical skills for material gain.
5. **Ambition and Progress**: Encouraging constant personal and professional advancement, often at the expense of well-being.
6. **Reward and Comfort**: Treating material rewards and financial security as the end goals of life.
7. **Respect for Authority and Hierarchy**: Upholding systems of power and structure as unchangeable necessities for order.

These tenets form the foundation of EM and reflect many of the societal pressures we encounter. While they often appear reasonable, they can lead to burnout, disconnection, and a sense of dissatisfaction when pursued without balance or intentionality.

SI Media

TV Shows

1. *SpongeBob SquarePants* – Comedy, Animation
2. *The Good Place* – Comedy/Drama, Fantasy
3. *Bojack Horseman* – Comedy/Drama, Animation

4. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* – Comedy/Drama, Musical
5. *Steven Universe* – Animation, Fantasy
6. *Bob's Burgers* – Comedy, Animation
7. *Heartbreak High* – Drama

Musicals

1. *Matilda* – Musical, Family/Drama
2. *Rent* – Musical, Drama

Movies

1. *Soul* (2020) – Animated, Fantasy/Drama
2. *Pay It Forward* – Drama
3. *Legally Blonde* – Comdey
4. *Tomorrowland* - Adventure/Scifi
5. *I Saw the TV Glow* – Thriller
6. *Iron Giant* – Animated, Comedy/Drama
7. *Pleasantville* – Political Comedy
8. *Don't Look Up* – Political Comedy

Books

1. *Binti* by Nnedi Okorafor – Science Fiction, African Futurism
2. *Something Borrowed* by Emily Giffin – Romance, Chick Lit
3. *The Ethical Slut* by Dossie Easton and Janet W. Hardy – Nonfiction, Relationships/Sexuality
4. *Ethics: The Fundamentals* by Julia Driver – Philosophy/Ethics
5. *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari – Anthropology/History
6. *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst* by Robert M. Sapolsky – Psychology/Behavioral Science
7. *The Anthropology of Religious Charisma: Ecstasies and Institutions* edited by Charles Lindholm – Anthropology/ Religion
8. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* edited by Arjun Appadurai – Anthropology/Organizational Studies
9. *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* by Gregory Maguire – Fantasy, Retelling

Songs

1. *Why Not* by Hilary Duff – Pop
2. *Isabel* by Isabel Pless – Indie Folk
3. *Where Is the Love?* by The Black Eyed Peas – Hip Hop/Pop
4. *Shake It Off* by Taylor Swift – Pop
5. *Heart's Content* by Brandi Carlile – Folk
6. *Vienna* by Billy Joel – Soft Rock
7. *Love Like You* by Rebecca Sugar (*Steven Universe*) – Ballad
8. *Always Find Your Way Back Home* by Hannah Montana – Pop
9. *Close Your Eyes* by Lisa Loeb – Folk
10. *Dalla Dalla* by ITZY – K-Pop
11. *Touch and Go* by Adam Melchor – Indie

SI Bonding Activities

1. Casual Connections

For light-hearted, low-pressure bonding:

- Trivia night or trivia games.
- Mini-golf or similar fun, casual activities.
- DIY trivia or question jar (fun, easy-to-do at any location).
- Cook-off challenge: Compete by cooking the same dish and comparing results.
- Show-and-tell: Bring items to share and discuss.

2. Building Deeper Emotional Bonds

For creating closeness and understanding:

- Memory Lane: Share personal stories and experiences.
- Dream Sharing: Discuss hopes, aspirations, and future goals.
- Partnered yoga or stretching: Build trust through

physical connection.

- 36 Questions or shared vulnerability games.
- Guided meditation together: Calm nerves and connect on a deeper level.

3. Exploring Intellectual Connections

For stimulating curiosity and learning:

- Book swap and discussion.
- TED Talk night: Watch talks and discuss their themes.
- Philosophical discussions on open-ended questions.
- Podcast swap: Share favorite episodes and reflect together.
- Science experiments at home: Hands-on fun that sparks conversation.
- Language exchange: Teach or learn a language together.

4. Fostering Trust and Flexibility

For those seeking relationship anarchy or adaptability:

- Blindfolded trust walk: Practice guiding and trusting each other.
- Art projects: Collaborate on creative work like painting or drawing.
- Cooking or crafting together: Explore how you work as a team.

5. For Students or Lifelong Learners

Activities that involve teaching or presentations:

- Teach each other something you're passionate about (short presentation or slideshow).

- Trivia or debate nights tailored to shared academic or intellectual interests.

6. Icebreaker Activities

For overcoming nerves or initial awkwardness:

- Storytelling games: Create a shared story with a fun twist each turn.
- Casual competitive activities, like cooking challenges or board games.
- Conversation cards: Use prompts to spark meaningful discussions.

Here's a list of **Sociointentionalism (SI) Token** and card-based activities designed to help individuals step out of their shell in a gradual, low-pressure way. These are grouped by social context and accommodate various needs, focusing on bravery as the main barrier.

With Family or Household Members

1. **Compliment Tokens**

- Write a simple compliment for each family member on a token or card. Hand them out over the course of a week.
- **Goal:** Build comfort expressing appreciation in close relationships.

2. **Question of the Day Jar**

- Drop in questions like "What's your favorite memory from childhood?" or "If you could have a superpower, what would it be?"
- Take turns answering one question each day during a meal or shared moment.
- **Goal:** Practice sharing and listening in a safe

environment.

3. **Kindness Challenge Tokens**

• Write small, kind actions on tokens (e.g., “Help with a chore,” “Make tea/coffee for someone,” “Share a funny story”).

• Pull a token daily to complete the challenge.

• **Goal:** Encourage acts of connection.

With Neighbors or Close Community

1. **Introduction Cards**

• Create simple cards that say, “Hi! I’m [Your Name]. I just wanted to say hello and hope you have a great day!”

• Leave them in mailboxes, slip them under doors, or give them with a smile.

• **Goal:** Ease into initiating contact without requiring a lengthy conversation.

2. **Token Exchange Game**

• Leave a note and a small token (like a craft, trinket, or baked good) for a neighbor with instructions to “Pass it on.” Encourage them to pay it forward with their own gesture.

• **Goal:** Build a sense of community and connection.

3. **Porch Greetings**

• Take a token or card with an icebreaker prompt like, “What’s the best restaurant around here?” or “What’s a hidden gem in the neighborhood?” Use it as a reason to chat with someone outside.

• **Goal:** Start small, friendly conversations with neighbors.

Small Challenges for Confidence Building

1. **Token Walkabouts**

• Take a walk and challenge yourself to say a simple "Hi" to three people you pass. Reward yourself with a token for each hello.

• **Goal:** Practice making small, low-stakes interactions.

2. **Kind Note Tokens**

• Write uplifting messages on tokens or cards ("You're amazing!" or "Keep going!") and leave them in public places like park benches or bus stops.

• **Goal:** Focus outward to build confidence in leaving your mark.

3. **Ask-for-Help Cards**

• Create small, non-intimidating challenges: ask someone for the time, directions, or their favorite local coffee shop. Use tokens to mark each successful attempt.

• **Goal:** Gain practice starting conversations in non-threatening contexts.

For Social Anxiety or Disabilities

1. **Prewritten Conversation Starters**

• Carry small cards with conversation prompts like, "Hi, I'm new here. Do you know a good place to visit nearby?" or "What's your favorite thing about this area?"

• Use these when nervous to guide interactions.

• **Goal:** Reduce the cognitive load of thinking of what to say.

2. **Virtual SI Token Challenges**

• If mobility or in-person interaction is difficult, engage with neighbors or community members online through neighborhood apps or groups (e.g., send a friendly message or comment on a post).

• **Goal:** Build connections without physical barriers.

3. **Gesture Tokens**

• Focus on non-verbal acts like smiling at someone, waving, or holding a door open. Mark each act on a token as a small bravery challenge.

• **Goal:** Practice non-verbal communication in manageable steps.

Gradual Progression Ideas

• **Level 1:** Begin with anonymous or indirect actions (e.g., leaving notes or small tokens).

• **Level 2:** Progress to brief interactions (e.g., saying “Hi,” giving a compliment).

• **Level 3: Work up to longer conversations or shared activities.**